The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness



By Shaikh 'Abdu'l–Razzāq
Ibn 'Abdu'l-Muḥsin al-Badr

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Explanation to the

GREATEST INVOCATION for FORGIVENESS

being a translation of his
'Sharḥ Ḥadīth Sayyid al-Istighfār'

دار السنة

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Learn all of you, the Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (Sayyid al-Istighfār)!"

[AL-NASĀ'I IN AL-KUBRĀ, #10301-10302]

EXPLANATION TO

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CONTENT

Sayyid al-Istighfār

اَللَّهُمَّ أنتَ ربِّي، لآ إِلَـهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ، وَأَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ، أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ، أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَأَبُوءُ لَكَ بِذَنْبِي، فَاغْفِرْ لِي، فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ.

"Allāhumma Anta Rabbī, lā-ilaha illā Anta, khalaqtanī wa anā ʿabduk, wa anā ʿala ʿahdika wa waʿdika mas-taṭaʿtu, Aʿūdhu bika min shari mā-ṣanʿatu. Abū'u laka biniʿamateka ʿalīyā, wa abū'u laka bi-dhanbī, faghfir lī fa-innahu lā yaghfiru al-dhunūba illā Anta."

"O Allāh, You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshipped but you. You created me and I am Your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (to You) as much as I can. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So I implore You to forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You."

Bukhārī, #6306, #6323

CHAPTER ONE

Explanation to the Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness

All praises due to Allāh, we praise Him, seek His assistance, and ask His forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Allāh from the evil of ourselves and the wickedness of our deeds. Verily whomever Allāh guides there is none to take him astray; and whomever Allāh allows to stray, there is none to guide. I bear witness that there is nothing worthy of worship but Allāh, He is one and has no partners; and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and last Messenger. May Allāh send His choicest blessing and Peace upon Muḥammad, his Companions and all his Family.

As to what follows:

Indeed the matter of forgiveness (*istighfār*) requires repentance (*maghfira*) of one's sins. This is amongst the most important of matters for a Muslim in his daily life. A person should take seriously and be extremely concerned about (seeking) forgiveness as there are many verses in the Book of Allāh, the Most High,

and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) that constantly prompt us to seek forgiveness. These primary sources mention the advantages and benefits of seeking forgiveness, especially for those who make it habitual.

Allāh said:

۞ قُلْ يَٰعِبَادِىَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا۟ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا۟ مِن
رَّحْمَةِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ

> "Say: 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Indeed, Allāh forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.'"
>
> [*al-Zumar* (39): 53]

Some of our righteous predecessors said that this verse was indeed the most motivating and hopeful verse in the Qur'ān.[1]

Allāh inspired us to seek forgiveness by explaining its merits (*faḍl*) and what we could harvest from it, in this world and the Hereafter. He mentioned about Prophet Nūḥ (*'alayhis-salām*) thus:

فَقُلْتُ ٱسْتَغْفِرُوا۟ رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ غَفَّارًا ﴿١٠﴾
يُرْسِلِ ٱلسَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُم مِّدْرَارًا ﴿١١﴾ وَيُمْدِدْكُم بِأَمْوَٰلٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَل
لَّكُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ أَنْهَٰرًا ﴿١٢﴾

> "And said: 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from]

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[1] Extract from 'Alī (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) and Ibn Mas'ūd (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*)—See *al-Tashīl* by Ibn Jauzyy, vol.1, p.1853 and see al-Qurtubī, vol.8, p.349 who extracts it from Ibn 'Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhumā*).

> the sky upon you in [continuing] showers. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers.'"
>
> [*Nūḥ* (71):10-12]

These great verses essentially provide succour and conclude the blessings and benefits of seeking forgiveness from Allāh.

It is recorded that when al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (may Allāh's mercy be upon him) was approached by a man complaining about his infertility. He replied advising, 'Seek forgiveness from Allāh.' Another man complained about his poverty and a third complained about the drought of his garden, and another about his disability to have children. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī replied to all this in the same manner, "Seek forgiveness from Allāh"[2]

His advice to all those complaining about their situation was to, *"Seek forgiveness"*, and then he read for them the above verses.[3]

These are some of the advantages that we harvest in this world, while greater recompense and immense reward awaits in the Hereafter. The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said in an authentic ḥadīth: "Glad tidings for him who finds in his record (of deeds), abundant *istighfār*."[4]

And there are numerous ḥadīth that advise us to seek forgiveness and explain the advantages of that. From the ḥadīth of Anas Ibn Mālik (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) found in the *Sunan* of al-Tirmidhī: "O

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[2] Mentioned by Ḥāfiẓ in *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, vol.11, p.98.

[3] *Nūḥ* (71):10-12

[4] Ibn Mājah, #3818—authenticated by Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr*, #3825.

son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds in the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth, and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it."[5]

So from this ḥadīth, we can see clearly where Allāh says: "O son of Adam, were your sins to reach *"anān al-samā"*"; some say this means, *"clouds in the sky"* and others say it refers to *"what can be seen with the naked eye."*

"and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you." Even though there was repetition of sins, Allāh will forgive him if he sincerely repents.

Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) narrated that he heard Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) say: "By Allāh, I seek Allāh's forgiveness and repent to Him more than seventy times a day."[6]

Allāh had forgiven him of all his past and future, yet he sought forgiveness more than hundred times a day. And as Ibn 'Umar (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhumā*) reported: 'In a single gathering, we counted the Prophet (ﷺ) mention hundred times before standing,

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي، وَتُبْ عَلَيَّ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ.

"Rabbi ighfir li watub 'aliyya Inaka Anta al-Tawwāb al-

[5] Tirmidhī, #3540, Darāmī, #2788, graded as ḥasan by Albānī in *Silsilah Aḥādīth as-Ṣaḥīḥah*, #127.

[6] Bukhārī, #6307.

Raḥīm."

"My Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance; verily, You alone accept repentance, the Forgiving."'[7]

He (ﷺ) used to seek forgiveness regularly.

Also from the narration of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim; on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*), he said: the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) said: "I swear by Him in whose hand is my soul, if you were a people who did not commit sin, Allāh would take you away and replace you with a people who would sin and then seek Allāh's forgiveness so He could forgive them."[8]

Allāh, the Most High, loves to forgive and loves those who repent. Among His Beautiful Names (*al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*) are (العفوّ) *al- 'Afuww* (the Forgiving), (الغفور) *al-Ghafūr* (the Ever-Forgiving) and (الغفّار) *al-Ghaffār* (the All-Forgiving).[9] Allāh loves that we seek forgiveness with His Names, and worship Him according to His Names.

وَلِلَّهِ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ فَٱدْعُوهُ بِهَا

"And to Allāh belong the best names, so invoke Him by them."

[*al-A'rāf* (7): 180]

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[7] Reported by Abū Dāwūd, #1516, Ibn Mājah, #3814 and Tirmidhī, #3434, al-Nasā'ī in *al-Kubrā*, #10292 and Tirmidhī said it is ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ

[8] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, #4936.

[9] For a more detail commentary to these Names refer to book *'Explanation to the Beautiful and Perfect Names of Allāh'* published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers 2008, Birmingham, UK.

As for the ḥadīth mentioned in Bukhārī and Muslim by Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*):

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: "Allāh has ninety-nine Names, and whoever preserves them will enter Paradise."[10]

To preserve these Names is not like what some people are doing where they write them down on a piece of paper and read them, but there are three levels to preserve His Names:

- The first level is to memorise (*ḥifẓ*) them
- The second level is to understand (*fahm*) their meanings
- The third level is to use them in prayer (*du'ā'*) by acknowledging His Supreme authority

For example, we know one of His Name is (التَّوَّابُ) *al-Tawwāb* (the Oft-Returning) and we use this frequently (in prayers), we understand the meaning as 'The One who accepts repentance (*tawbah*)' and therefore follow it up with actions that qualify this understanding. We ask the Most Forgiving to pardon all our sins. We do likewise with all of His other Names (*Asmā'*), memorise and understand His Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) correctly and steer clear of wrong interpretations and out right denial of it!

Our understanding is far removed from any false concepts. We understand them how our righteous predecessors (*salaf*) understood. (العفوُ) *al- 'Afuww* (the Forgiving), (الغفورُ) *al-Ghafūr* (the Ever-Forgiving) and (الغفّارُ) *al-Ghaffār* (the All-Forgiving); these are from the Names of Allāh that necessitate seeking forgiveness constantly, and showing sincere repentance (*tawbah*) and humbleness (*inābah*)

[10] Bukhārī, #2736, #6410, #7392 and Muslim, #4836.

to Allāh. Verily the forgiveness of Allāh is not for everyone but for those who puts forth deeds that earn forgiveness and refrain from deeds that repel it.

Generally, the conditions of forgiveness are as mentioned in the Book of Allāh:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِۦ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ

Verily, Allāh forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills."

[*al-Nisā'* (4): 48]

Allāh's forgiveness (*maghfira*) therefore, reaches the one who deserve it and those who make effort to repent wholeheartedly. The main verse that outlines the factors which lead to forgiveness of sins (*dhunūb*) is:

وَإِنِّى لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا ثُمَّ ٱهْتَدَىٰ ﴿٨٢﴾

"But indeed, I am the Perpetual Forgiver of whoever repents and truly believes, does righteous and correct deeds, and then remains constant upon right guidance."

[*TāHā* (20: 82]

There are certain pre-requisites necessary in attaining forgiveness

وَإِنِّى لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَءَامَنَ

"But indeed, I am the Perpetual Forgiver of whoever repents and believes."

That we should endeavour to fulfil, namely; staying away from the sins altogether, regretting (*nadm*) the sins committed and pledge (*'azm*) not to return to it again.

وَءَامَنَ

"...truly believes..."

He truly believes in Allāh, His Angels, His Books and His Messengers and all that he has Commanded you to believe in

وَعَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا

"does righteous and correct deeds"

He who performs righteous deeds (*al-a'māl al-ṣāliḥa*), and one who is steadfast in all the commandments of Islām like prayer, fasting, remembrance of Allāh, fear of Allāh and paying attention towards them and all other good deeds openly (*ẓhāirah*) and in secret (*qalbiyah*).

ثُمَّ ٱهْتَدَىٰ ﴿٨٢﴾

"then remains constant upon right guidance"

Then he is steadfast in all of that, he does not violate nor turn back, he persists upon them until his last breath; and whoever does that, Allāh will forgive his sin (*dhanb*) and conceal (*sitr*) his defects (*'ayb*) and he will be among the people who attain the forgiveness of Allāh, the One full of Glory and Honour.

It was mentioned earlier that repentance nullifies the past, or wipes away all past sins. There is no act of good deed that can wipe away past sins altogether beside *tawbah* (repentance). For those who repent to Allāh from his sins, Allāh will forgive his sins even if they are abundant like the foam on the ocean.

Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿ قُلْ يَٰعِبَادِىَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا۟ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا۟ مِن
رَّحْمَةِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ

> "Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Indeed, Allāh forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.'"
>
> [*al-Zumar* (39): 53]

Allāh will forgive sinners regardless of the amount or the types of sins committed, as long one has not ascribed partners (*shirk*) to Him. Whenever they repent to Allāh, Allāh will forgive.

Seeking forgiveness has a great status in Islām, as Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said: 'That the act of repentance may take a man away from an offensive act and towards a pleasing habit, and from being deficient towards perfection. A man is raised from a lowly rank to a higher and better position. Thus a servant becomes a servant of Allāh who is aware of his Lord every day, every hour and every minute. He increases his knowledge about Allāh and is aware of his religion and his bond with Allāh. He ponders about Allāh even when eating, drinking, sleeping and while awake. He subconsciously submits to Allāh's Will in all his words or actions and so on. Due to the presence of his heart on a high level, and by giving it (the heart) its rights, he will then see his shortcomings become more evident. Nevertheless, he still requires the need to seek forgiveness day and night, in reality he is desperately in need of forgiveness in all his speech and action, what is apparent and what is hidden—as this will help to improve his affairs and receive goodness. It will also prevent harm and increase the

strength and determination to perform deeds; be it of spiritual or physical nature.'[11]

This short treatise is intended to explain the tremendous way of seeking forgiveness (*istighfār*) found in the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). The people of knowledge have mentioned as being the most excellent and most complete form of seeking forgiveness; therefore it is important to memorising it's wording, to understanding it correctly and to acting upon it.

On the authority of Shaddād Ibn Aws (*raḍiyAllāhu ʿanhu*) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The Greatest Invocation for forgiveness is that the servant says:

اَللّٰهُمَّ أنتَ ربِّي، لَآ إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ، وَأَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ، أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ، أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَأَبُوءُ لَكَ بِذَنْبِي، فَاغْفِرْ لِي، فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ.

"Allāhumma Anta Rabbī, lā-ilaha illā Anta, khalaqtanī wa and ʿabduk, wa anā ʿala ʿahdika wa waʿdika mastaṭaʿtu, Aʿūdhu bika min shari mā-ṣanʿat. Abū'u laka biniʿamateka ʿalīyā, wa abū'u laka bi-dhanbī, faghfir lī fa-innahu lā yaghfiru al-dhunūba illā Anta."

"O Allāh, You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshipped but you. You created me and I am Your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (to You) as much as I can. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So I entreat You to forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You."

[11] *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā* by Ibn Tayimiyyah, vol.11, p.696.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Whoever says it during the day with firm faith in it and dies on the same day before the evening, he would be from the people of Paradise; and whoever recites it at night with firm faith in it and dies before the morning, he will be from the people of Paradise."[12]

In some other narrations: "he will enter paradise"[13]

And in another narration: "except that he would be guaranteed paradise"[14]

This prayer (*duʿā'*) is encouraged to be read in the morning and evening, thus a man of prudence and knowledge (*ʿilm*) will act as such. If he recites it at night before the morning, he will be from the people of Paradise and if he recites it at night before the morning, he will be from the people of Paradise.

This ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī was mentioned in the *'Kitāb al-daʿawāt'* (Book of Prayers) under the chapter, *'Bāb afḍal al-Istighfār'* (Chapter on the most excellent of Seeking Forgiveness). Al-Bukhārī also mentioned this ḥadīth in another chapter in, *'Kitāb al-daʿawāt'* (Book of Prayers) which he titled *'Bāb mā yaqul idhā asbah'* (Chapter of what one should say in the morning).

This shows that Imām Bukhārī was of the opinion that the ḥadīth of *'The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness'* is the most excellent and most complete form of seeking forgiveness.

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[12] Bukhārī, #6306, #6323.

[13] It is from the narration of Bukhārī, #6323.

[14] Tirmidhī, #3393.

If we ponder on the meaning of the ḥadīth, we realise that this immense prayer encompasses profound dispositions for the one who reads it; like assuming humility, meekness, submission and letting the reader grasp the supreme sovereignty of Allāh and His blessings. We come to understand that none forgives sins except Allāh, therefore, we arrive at the conclusion that this prayer is worthy of being called 'The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (*sayyid al-istighfār*)'—the leading prayer through which forgiveness is sought.

There is no other ḥadīth reported from Shaddād Ibn Aws (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) except this ḥadīth that is found in the collection of Imām Bukhārī. This ḥadīth is also only found in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, and there are no other reports regarding this from Ṣaḥīḥ of Imām Muslim. Some of the Imāms of *Sunan*, like al-Nasā'ī and al-Tirmidhī reported a similar ḥadīth with different wordings, which again reflects the importance of learning this prayer for *istighfār*.

In the narration of Imām Tirmidhī, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Shall I tell you the Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (*sayyid al-istighfār*)?"[15]

And in the narration of Imām Nasā'ī, he (ﷺ) said, "Learn all of you, the Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (*sayyid al-istighfār*)!"[16]

In this ḥadīth, there is encouragement to learn this greatest method (*al-ṣigha al-'aẓīma*) of seeking forgiveness (*istighfār*) from

[15] Tirmidhī, #3393—authenticated by Albāni in *Silsilah Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, #1747.

[16] Al-Nasā'ī in *al-Kubrā*, #10301-10302; ḥadīth on the authority of Jābir (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*)

Allāh, the Most High.

There are other variations of this ḥadīth reported from Abū Hurayrah, Ibn 'Umar, Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn Abza and Buraydah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhum*). However, the narration we mentioned from Shaddād Ibn Aws (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*) contains the wording that is found in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

It is incumbent that we first memorise this *du'ā'* (prayer) which the Prophet (ﷺ) described as the 'The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (*sayyid al-istighfār*)' and become accustomed to using it each morning and evening, with the intention to understand its meanings, definitions and purpose.

Some of the scholars said that the advantage and preference of this prayer is that it contains all the qualities to be '*sayyid al-Istighfār*'. 'The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (*sayyid al-istighfār*)' is the most common name used.[17]

Below are the meanings of the prayer word for word:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said in commencing the prayer: 'That the Servant says ..."the word,

اَللّٰهُمَّ

"Allāhumma"

O Allāh!

means by agreement, 'O Allāh! (يا الله—*Yā Allāh*)' and it is a word whose meaning occur frequently in most of the prayers in the

[17] Mentioned by al-Ṭayyibī see *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, vol.11, p.119, *Natā'ij al-Afkār fī Sharḥ Sayyid al-Istighfār*, p.149 and *Mur'āta al-Mufātīḥ*, vol.8, p.33.

Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of our Prophet (ﷺ).

Ibn al-Qayyim (*raḥimahullāh*) said, "There is no dispute that the word '*Allāhumma*' means 'O Allāh! (*Yā Allāh*)', therefore it is not supposed to be used except when making prayer. One should not say:

اللّهمّ غفور رحيم

"O Allāh, The Most Forgiving Most Merciful'

but rather he says:

اللّهمّ اغفر لي وارحمني

"O Allāh forgive me and have mercy on me."[18]

Followed by the saying:

اَللَّهُمَّ أنتَ ربِّي، لَآ إِلَـهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ،

Allāhumma Anta Rabbī, lā-ilaha illā Anta, khalaqtanī wa and 'abduk."

"O Allāh, You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshipped but you. You created me and I am Your slave."

It combines two types of *Tawḥīd* in this sentence. *Al-Ma'rifah* (knowledge) and *al-Ithbāt* (affirmation) and *al-Iradāh* (intention) and *al-Ṭalab* (worship).

Thus the two types of *Tawḥīd* that we are commanded to assert and believe in, is divided into two categories:

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[18] *Jalā' al-Afḥām* by Ibn Qayyim, pg.143.

1) *Tawḥīd al-Maʿrifah wa'l-Ithbāt* (*Tawḥīd* with regard to that which one must know and affirm).
2) *Tawḥīd al-Iradā wa'l-Ṭalab* (*Tawḥīd* with regard to ones intentions and worship).

Tawḥīd al-Maʿrifah and *al-Ithbāt* are inherent to declaring the Oneness of Lordship and to be aware that Allāh is The Creator (*al-Khāliq*), The Provider (*al-Rāziq*), the One who grants all blessings (*al-Munʿim*), the One who grants all blessings, (*al-Mutassarif*), the One who alone is in control of all the affairs (*al-Mudabbir*) of His creation and also to declare faith (*iqrār*) in His Names (*Asmā'*) and Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) that are mentioned in the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).

Thus the *Tawḥīd* of *al-Maʿrifah* and *al-Ithbāt* concludes *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* (belief in the unique Oneness of Lordship), and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' wa'l-Ṣifāt* (belief in Allāh's Names and Attributes) because what we are told is to acknowledge (*iʿtirāf*) and declare (*iqrār*). Knowing Allāh is alone in His Actions (*afʿāl*)—like in His creating (*khalq*), sustaining (*al-rizq*), blessings (*al-inʿām*), giving life (*al-iḥyā'*) and death (*al-imāta*) etc—we must also declare and acknowledge His Glorified Names (*Asmā' al-Husnā*) and His lofty high Attributes (*Ṣifāt al-ʿUlā*) .

The second category is *Tawḥīd al-Irādah* and *al-Ṭalab*, which is *Tawḥīd al-Ibādah*—to direct worship to Allāh alone with sincere (*ikhlāṣ*) intention, and that all the good deeds are for Allāh and only Him alone.

Therefore this ḥadīth is a combination of the two *Tawḥīds*. Firstly, where he (ﷺ) said

اَللّٰهُمَّ أنتَ رَبِّي،

"Allāhumma Anta Rabbī."

"O Allāh, You are my Lord!"

then he said

خَلَقْتَنِي

"khalaqtanī"

"You created me"

which is *Tawḥīd al-Maʿrifah* and *al-Ithbāt*; declaration of the Oneness of Allāh and that He is the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) and there is no creator other than Him.

Then he (ﷺ) said:

لَآ إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ،

"lā-ilaha illā Anta"

"None has the right to be worshipped but you."

and

أَنَا عَبْدُكَ،

"anā ʿabduka"

"I am your slave"

—this is *Tawḥīd al-Iradah* and *al-Ṭalab* which is sincere submission to Allāh.

Thus this prayer began with the two type of *Tawḥīd* that constitute the core of faith. To uphold the two is far greater than to sustain anything else.

Then the phrase

خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ،

"khalaqtanī wa anā ʿabduka"

"You created me and I am your slave"

proves a fact affirmed by scholars that *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* is always related to *Tawḥīd al-ʿUlūhiyyah.* Thus, if a person declares that there is no Creator but Allāh, it is incumbent for him to worship nothing but Him alone. When there is no partner for Him in (His Attribute of) creating, then there can be no partner for Him in worship.

خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ،

"khalaqtanī wa anā ʿabduka"

"You created me and I am your slave"

since there is no Creator for me besides You, there is no Lord to be worshipped besides You. You alone determine my sustenance, my life, my death and therefore I will not worship anyone except You. I will neither humble nor degrade myself and ask or plead with anyone except You. You are the One who made me from nothing.

When a person knows that there is no creator but Allāh, none who provides but Allāh, none who gives blessings except Allāh, none who governs all of the creation but Him, would he then go

and pray at the graves of so an so, and plead at the tomb of a dead person? Where is the faith (that he declared)?

Those who understand that Allāh is the only Creator will worship Him alone. Oneness of God in Lordship (*Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah*) is mentioned numerously in the Qur'ān, and about His Abilities to sustain, give life and death—all of which are a declaration of faith in worship (*Tawḥīd al-'Ulūhiyyah*):

وَأَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمْ فَٱعْبُدُونِ ﴿٩٢﴾

"...and I am your Lord; so worship Me."

[*al-Anbiyā'* (21): 92]

Meaning, "just as there is no Lord (*Rabb*) for you besides Me, there is nothing worthy (*ma'būd*) for you to worship but Me."

Allāh said,

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ وَٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلْأَرْضَ فِرَٰشًا وَٱلسَّمَآءَ بِنَآءً وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِۦ مِنَ ٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا۟ لِلَّهِ أَندَادًا وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

"O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous. [He] who made for you the earth a bed [spread out] and the sky a ceiling and sent down from the sky, rain and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you. So do not attribute to Allāh equals while you know [that

there is nothing similar to Him]."

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 21-22]

Those mentioned in this verse are people who take rivals (*andād*) and partners (*shurakā'*) in worshipping Allāh. Ibn Abbās (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhumā*) said, "Do not make association in worship when you know. Verily there is no other Creator for you besides Allāh."[19]

It is a tremendous disgrace (*ashadu al-'ayb)* for those who ask any other besides Allāh, who plead to other than Him and seek protection from something that neither benefits nor harms him, while forgetting the Creator, the Sustainer and the One who Benefits. Allāh is the One who harms, the One who blesses and the One who Guides the affairs of all of the creation.

It is a sad to see the condition of people nowadays, those who say they belong to Islām and declare there is no Creator but Allāh, even saying *'Lā ilāha illAllāh'* yet we see them going to tombs and graveyards, the tomb of al-Badawī, the tombs of Zaynab and Nafisah and others. They make sacrifices, oaths, beseech, pray and hope. They stand meekly, ask, and humble themselves. They do all these acts of worship solely for the grave that does not harm or benefit.

Allāh said:

قُلِ ٱدْعُواْ ٱلَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُم مِّن دُونِهِۦ فَلَا
يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ ٱلضُّرِّ عَنكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٥٦﴾

"Say: 'Invoke those you have claimed [as gods] besides

[19] Reported by Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr*, #486 and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his *tafsīr*, #229.

Him, for they do not possess the [ability for] removal of adversity from you or [for its] transfer [to someone else]."

[*al-Isrā'* (17): 56]

and

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهِمَا مِن شِرْكٍ وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُم مِّن ظَهِيرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَا تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِندَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُزِّعَ عَن قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ

"Say, [O Muḥammad], 'Invoke those you claim [as deities]besides Allāh.' They do not possess an atom's weight [of ability] in the heavens or on the earth, and they do not have therein any partnership [with Him], nor is there for Him from among them any assistant. And intercession does not benefit with Him except for one whom He permits. [And those wait] until, when terror is removed from their hearts, they will say [to one another], 'What has your Lord said?' They will say, 'The truth.' And He is the Most High, the Grand."

[*Sabā'* (34): 22-23]

He forgets and is ignorant to the fact that the One he should ask, beseech, depend on and worship is Allāh alone, the Creator. Thus the ḥadīth provides great spiritual guidance in directing us (to the correct way of prayer).

Then it says:

لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنْتَ،

"lā-ilaha illā Anta"

"None has the right to be worshipped save you."

this is a confirmation in declaring Allāh's *'Ulūhiyyah* (worship). This great phrase in the prayer is upon which the cause of the whole of creation rests. It is the phrase that makes the sky and the earth firm and brings the existence of Paradise and Hell fire into being.

There are two types of people: The joyful people and those who are sorrowful—the people of Paradise and the people of Hell fire. The people of *Shahādah 'Lā ilāha illallāh'*—are the people of Paradise and the people who disbelieve in it are the people of Hell fire. The prayer hence started with a great declaration.

The scholars explain that this word will not benefit the owner until he fulfils the conditions that are stated in the Qur'ān and Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). These conditions have been rendered into verse as follows[20]:

"The seven conditions stated
In the texts of revelation revealed in truth.

Verily it does not benefit the declarer;
by words alone until it is perfected.

with knowledge (*'ilm*), certainty (*yaqīn*), acceptance (*qubūl*);

[20] Written by Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥakamī in his book of poem *Sullam ul-Wusul.*

and submission (*inqiyād*) you will understand what I say.

Truthfulness (*ṣidq*), sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and love (*maḥabba*);
May Allāh guide you for the love of Him.

This poem enlightens us of the seven great conditions to "there is no God save Allāh". There are numerous proofs from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) regarding this. However, this is not the place to elaborate and quote all of them.[21]

Then it says

أَنَا عَبْدُكَ،

"anā 'abduka"

"I am your slave"

This is an acknowledgment of servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*), and that all of the creation is a slave (*'ibād*) of Allāh. There are two types of *'ubūdiyyah*:

1. To enslave oneself to the Lordship of Allāh (*'ubūdiyyah li-rubūbiyyah*)
2. To enslave oneself to the Worship of Allāh (*'ubūdiyyah li-'ulūhiyyah*)

To enslave oneself to the oneness of Allāh—It is to believe that Allāh is the One who made all of the creation to exist. He creates and gives sustenance, gives life and death. He has no partner in all of the above.

إِن كُلُّ مَن فِي
ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ إِلَّآ ءَاتِي ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ عَبْدًا ﴿٩٣﴾

[21] See the details and proofs in the book, *Mārij al-Qubūl* in Nadhim's poetry.

> "There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant."
>
> [*Maryam* (19): 93]

This kind of *'ubūdiyyah* is in everyone. Every creation knows the existence of God because Allāh is the One who brought them into existence, provides for them and gives them life and death.

To enslave oneself to the worship of Allāh (*'ubūdiyyah li-'ulūhiyyah*)—Allāh has made this exclusive only to some of His creations whom He guides with faith and obedience [to the Most Merciful]. Those are the slaves of His Worship (*'ibād li-'ulūhiyyah*). They humble themselves before Allāh, obey Him and adhere to His laws; doing only what is commanded and obeying His (chosen) Messengers.

This kind of worship (*'ubūdiyyah li-'ulūhiyyah*) is given specifically to some of Allāh's creation, His Prophets, and the people who follow them. For this reason, He attached them to Himself as an honour as mentioned in the Qur'ān:

وَعِبَادُ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ

> "And the servants of the Most Merciful(*al-Raḥmān*)..."
>
> [*al-Furqān* (25): 63]

These are the people who were guided, are steadfast in worship, obey Him and abide by His Laws. The meaning of

أَنَا عَبْدُكَ،

"anā 'abduka"

"I am your slave"

is generally put in the ḥadīth of enslaving oneself to the worship of Allāh (*'ubūdiyyah li-'ulūhiyyah*) because the word

خَلَقْتَنِي

"khalaqtanī"

"You created me"

and the word

اَللّٰهُمَّ أنتَ ربِّي،

"Allāhumma Anta Rabbī."

"O Allāh, You are my Lord!"

was (put in the context of) enslaving oneself to the Lordship of Allāh (*'ubūdiyyah li-rubūbiyyah*).

The word

أَنَا عَبْدُكَ،

"anā 'abduka"

"I am your slave"

means I am the worshipper of You, an obedient slave to You who fulfils Your command and keeps Your commandment.

It then continues,

وَأَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ،

"wa anā 'ala 'ahdika wa wa'dika mas-taṭa'tu"

"and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (to

You) as much as I can."

The scholars give few meanings to this. Some said

وَأَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ،

"wa anā 'ala 'ahdika wa wa'dika mas-taṭa'tu"

"and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (to You) as much as I can."

means that I pledge to You and I make a covenant that I will strive in faith and worship, and maintain Your laws while remaining steadfast in them the best I can. Allāh will not burden a soul with more than what it can bear and the worshipper who said *"I am your servant"* is he who firmly holds to Islām as he has made an oath to Allāh and promised that he would continue to have faith and is duty bound to obey Him.

Hence, a servant is in fact making an oath to Allāh in every prayer with sincerity:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

"You alone do we worship, and from You alone do we seek help."

[*al-Fātiḥah* (1): 5]

This is a covenant and a pledge to worship Him alone and not worship others, or ask help except from Him. Some of the scholar said that it means, 'I will abide by the oath I have given in obeying Your commands and shall uphold them the best I can. Allāh had taken an oath from us to be steadfast in faith (*īmān*), and we have been commanded. This is the servant who makes this prayer 'O Allāh, verily I am bound by the oath I gave you in faith—standing firm, obeying them and upholding them the best I can.'

It then continues,

مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ،

"mas-taṭa'tu"

"as much as I can."

This includes all levels of ability, and it is from the Mercy of Allāh to this ummah. Some of the scholars said regarding the phrase

مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ،

"mas-taṭa'tu"

"as much as I can."

'there are conditions for ability, namely to know the weakness and deficiency where one is unable to perfect his faith to its highest level. He knows his weakness and defects and therefore asks not to be taken to task for those weaknesses, flaws and deficiencies.

Allāh says:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

"Allāh burdens not a person beyond his scope."
[*al-Baqarah* (2): 286]

There is a ḥadīth where Allāh says: "I did"[22]

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "If I order you with something then do as much of it as you are able to, and if I forbid you from something,

[22] Muslim, #180 on the authority of Ibn Abbās (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhumā*)

then keep away from it."[23]

The scholars have explained that whenever there is a command, there is a correlation with ability. Some things cannot be done by some people or they are able to do it but could not perfect it. Thus it is done with ability, however the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "if I forbid you from something then keep away from it", he did not say 'keep away as much as you are able'.

The scholars said: 'The forbidden act should be abandoned, and to abandon is within everyone's ability'—everyone is able to abandon adultery, stealing or killing etc. What Allāh has forbidden is within the ability of every man. Nobody should say: 'I cannot leave this sin.' Only the one who is corrupted and enslaved to his desire to do the forbidden things (Allāh forbid) will do that. Thus there is no connection between forbidden things and ability.

The word

مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ

"mas-taṭa'tu"

"as much as I can."

emphasises that no one can keep all the commandments that Allāh has made obligatory for them. No one can promise to achieve perfect obedience, or be extremely grateful for each and every blessings given to them, thus Allāh bestowed His Mercy upon people. He does not burden them with something that they can't bear. The person who is struggling (to uphold his covenant) has been honest to Allāh with his obedience, gratefulness and

[23] Bukhāri, #7288 and Muslim #2380 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu*)

declaration on faith, which is beyond his ability. Verily Allāh knows what the eyes deceive and what the chests conceal.

The prayer then reads,

أَبُوءُ لَكَ

"Abū'u laka "

" I acknowledge before You."

meaning that I acknowledge and admit to all the blessings Allāh has given me and (in return) I admit the sins I've committed. Thus this phrase is a combination between realising ability and exposing the shortcoming of one's own self and actions.

By realising one's ability one shall love and be grateful to the one who blesses and bestows kindness (Allāh), whereas exposing shortcomings leads to one humbling himself, and repenting all the time. He does not see his Lord except as the One who is Kind and Great, and does not see himself except as a sinner with many flaws.

Then it says:

بِنِعْمَتِكَ

"biniʿamateka"

"all the blessings You have bestowed"

to acknowledge all the blessings of Allāh, because the word *'blessing'* (in Arabic) is a *'dependant singular'* (*mufrad muḍhaf*). The theory is that if a singular depends on a plural then the word does not specify one particular blessing, rather a vast range. It says

بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ

"bini'amateka 'alīyā"

"all the blessings You have bestowed upon me"

meaning I acknowledge and declare with all Your blessings you have blessed me with, and all the blessings are indeed from Allāh Glory be to Him. He is the Giver and the owner of all (these blessings):

وَمَا بِكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ ٱللَّهِ ۖ ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ ٱلضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْـَٔرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

> "And whatever you have of favour—it is from Allāh. Then when adversity touches you, to Him you cry for help."
>
> [*al-Naḥl* (16): 53]

Hence all the blessings come from Allāh. The phrase

أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ

"Abū'u laka bini'amateka 'alīyā "

> " I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me."

is an acknowledgment to all of Allāh's blessings, the blessing of *īmān*, the blessing of health, the blessing of children, the blessing of land, the blessing of house and all other blessings. There are no blessings that come from other than Allāh.

Allāh said:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن
كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ۝٧

"And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favour]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.'"

[*Ibrāhīm* (14): 7]

If a person knows that all the blessings are from Allāh alone, and there is no partner or associate (*sharīk*) with Him in that, he shall be grateful for that with his heart, words and actions. He knows that everything comes from Allāh and so he doesn't use these blessings to sin against Allāh. This is the basis of acknowledging and declaring that Allāh is granting him the blessings and chose him to have all that.

Then it says

وَأَبُوءُ لَكَ بِذَنْبِي،

"wa abū'u laka bi-dhanbī."

"and I confess to You all my sins."

which means I admit and acknowledge my sins. The scholars have two different meanings on this:

First: I know of my sins, by which I have not been completely grateful to Your blessings since the word implies that I know I've been less grateful for the blessings.

Second: To understand the position of sins only, implying that I know my sins and my mistakes, and every error comes from

me—thus a person knows he is a sinner and has defects towards (fulfilling) the rights of Allāh. This is the first step towards repentance (i.e to acknowledge sin); however if he sins and does wrong and abandons divine commandments, he continues to ignore it and doesn't feel he is going wrong by the sin, then this repentance is far from being accepted unless he becomes guided to see the reasons and shown the way.

Perhaps from these two meaning, the closest is the second one since to know our deficiency and the state of sin is an invite to keep asking for forgiveness. This is indeed provides a great meaning to the ḥadīth.

Then it says:

"I acknowledge Your favour upon me and I acknowledge my sin",

أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَأَبُوءُ لَكَ بِذَنْبِي،

> "Abū'u laka bini'amateka 'alīyā, wa abū'u laka bi-dhanbī."
>
> " I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins.."

making it clear to us that a person's life consists of two things: The blessings he is given by Allāh for which he needs to be thankful (*shukr*); and the sins that occur and degrade him for which he need to seek forgiveness from.

This prayer concludes both of them, some of the salaf said: 'Verily I wake up between blessings and sins, thus I want to be

grateful for the blessings and seek forgiveness from the sins'[24]

There is a great lesson can be taken from this ḥadīth, that whoever acknowledges his sins and then repents, Allāh will surely forgive him no matter how vast the sin is, so long he acknowledges and admits that by saying, "I am a sinner, I know I have committed a sin, hence forgive me as there is none who can forgive except You."

Whoever does both of them (acknowledgement of sin and seeking forgiveness), then his will be forgiven. This is what the ḥadīth is stating, and there is a clear evidence from a another ḥadīth from the incidence of the *Ifk* (different source (of ḥadīth)—the ḥadīth of *Al-Ifk*[25] where the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Verily when a servant acknowledges his sin and then repents, Allāh will forgive him"[26]

This brings clarity to the explanation of the ḥadīth of *'Sayyid al-Istighfār'*.

Then it states at the end of the prayer,

فَاغْفِرْ لِي، فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

"faghfir lī fa-innahu lā yaghfiru al-dhunūba illā Anta."

"So I entreat You to forgive my sins, for nobody can

[24] Mentioned by Ibn Taymiyyah in *Jāmi' al-Risālah*, vol.1, p.116 and Ibn Qayyim in *Tariq al-Ḥijratain*, #170.

[25] A lengthy ḥadīth relating to the controversy involving 'Ā'ishah and Safwān (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhumā*).

[26] Bukhāri, #2661, #4141 and Muslim, #4974 on the authority of 'Ā'ishah (*raḍiyAllāhu 'anhā*).

forgive sins except You."

—this is where a person understands that Allāh alone who can forgive, He is the one who accept repentance from His servants, hence a person shall focus that his repentance, seeking forgiveness, plead and pray is for Allāh alone. There is none to forgive sins except Him.

وَمَن يَغْفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ

"and who is there to forgive sins except Allāh?"
[*Āl-'Imrān* (3): 135]

In general terms, the ḥadīth contains two matters of immense value: *Tawḥīd* and *Istighfār* (Affirming the Oneness of Allāh and seeking repentance). These two are from the most important of affairs. They comprise a great combination within one's prayer, and they have always been coupled together in the Qur'ān and Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Allāh said:

فَٱعْلَمْ أَنَّهُۥ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ وَٱسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنۢبِكَ
وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَىٰكُمْ ﴿١٩﴾

"So know, [O Muḥammad], that there is no deity except Allāh and ask forgiveness for your sin and for the believing men and believing women. And Allāh knows of your movement and your resting place."
[*Muḥammad* (47): 19]

The above profoundly beautiful verse mentions a combination of *Tawḥīd* and *Istighfār*. Allāh also Mentioned the story of Prophet Yunūs (*'alayhis-salām*):

فَنَادَىٰ فِي ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ أَن لَّآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنتَ سُبْحَٰنَكَ إِنِّي كُنتُ مِنَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

> "And he called out within the darknesses, 'There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers.'"
>
> [*al-Anbiyā'* (21): 87]

There is present here also, a combination of the two in the verse:

فَٱسْتَقِيمُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِ وَٱسْتَغْفِرُوهُ

> "So take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness."
>
> [*Fuṣṣilāt* (41): 6]

There are amongst many verses and ḥadīth where both of these tremendous elements are combined together (*Tawḥīd* and *Istighfār*). Declaring that there is none worthy of worship except Allāh with truthfulness and sincerity wipes away *shirk*—big or small, ignorantly or knowingly, the past and present, the hidden and the seen and from all types of sins.

Asking forgiveness wipes away everything that a person had committed and also wipes away sins that had *shirk* in it. In fact all sins are considered to have (some element of) *shirk* in them, so therefore establishing *Tawḥīd* removes the core of *shirk*, and forgiveness wipes the branches (of *shirk*).

Thus the best way to glorify Allāh is to say

لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا ٱللهُ

'Lā Ilāha IllAllāh'

and the best *du'ā'* is to say

أستغفر الله

'Astaghfirullāh'[27]

—both of which are mentioned in the ḥadīth of *sayyid al-istighfār.*

In concluding, indeed the prayer of *sayyid al-istighfār* contains within it, great meanings and profound points of benefit and explanation that indicate as to why it was called *sayyid al-istighfār*, amongst them are:

1. Acknowledgement of Allāh's Divinity (*'ulūhiyyah)* and sole right to be worshipped (*'ubūdiyyah*).
2. Acknowledging Allāh as the sole Creator.
3. Acknowledgement of the Covenant that Allāh has taken from His servants
4. Having hope of what has been promised for them.
5. Seeking protection from the evil that occurs from one's soul.
6. To assign all blessings to the owner and giver, being Allāh alone.
7. To assign all errors and sin to oneself.
8. Having hope of being forgiven and the acknowledging that none but Allāh alone is able to give that.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allāh have mercy upon him) said, '*Istighfār* implies attesting to Allāh's *Rubūbiyyah* and *'Ulūhiyyah*, and knowing that He is the Creator of the Universe, thus he begins with (acknowledging) his weakness in fulfilling Allāh's right upon him and knowing that he is a slave whose forelock is in Allāh's Hands and in His grip, from which he can never run away from—as he

[27] *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, vol.11, pp.696-697.

has no protector except Him. Then he earnestly strives to fulfil his oath towards keeping to Allāh's Commands and Prohibitions; an oath that came through the tongue of His Messenger.

And all that I do, is according to my ability and not to what You truly deserve—verily none of mankind is capable of that, and it is only a little effort which is within my own means. Therefore I am a believer to the rewards You have promised to the people who are obedient, and the punishment to the people who sin.

Thus I stand to what I have promised and believe to what has been promised for me. I then turn and come towards You to protect me from all the evil that I do against Your Commands and Prohibitions. Otherwise I will be affected by all the evil that has surrounded me. Indeed to abandon Your right is the core reason for one's destruction.

I therefore declare and acknowledge my sins to You. From You is the goodness, kindness and grace, whereas from me is all the sin and evil. I ask You to forgive me, to wipe away my sins and cleanse me from evil. Verily there is no one who can forgive sins except You, therefore this prayer is the Master of all Prayers because it guarantees the purest of worship.[28]

We have to adhere to this prayer and make it as our (core *dhikr*) remembrance of Allāh in the day and night. We should memorise the phrases completely; and the best is to memorise the exact words in the way they have been taught from the ḥadīth of Bukhārī. We should memorise these phrases and read them regularly in the morning after the *Fajr* prayer, and in the evening before or after the *Maghrib* prayer. We ask Allāh the Most generous, Lord of the

[28] *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, vol.1, pp.221-222.

Great Throne with His blessed Names and Attributes to give us sustenance and help us to keep this prayer and all other *adhkār* (remembrances) and duties.

The end of our call is Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of all the worlds. May Allāh send His Peace and blessing upon His servant, the Messenger, our Prophet Muḥammad and all his family and Companions.[29]

[29] This booklet is based on a lecture wherein I made few amendments to appropriate its method of use. Allāh is the best of Guides.

APPENDIX ONE

All praise and thanks are due to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds.

The Wisdom in mentioning *Tawḥīd* alongside Forgiveness

It is for this reason that *tawḥīd* is mentioned alongside asking for forgiveness in many places,

فَٱعْلَمْ أَنَّهُۥ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ وَٱسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنۢبِكَ
وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَىٰكُمْ ﴿١٩﴾

"Know that there is none worthy of worship save Allāh and ask forgiveness for your wrongdoing..."

[*Muḥammad* (47): 19]

أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوٓا۟ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّنِى لَكُم مِّنْهُ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾ وَأَنِ ٱسْتَغْفِرُوا۟
رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِ

"Do not worship anyone but Allāh! I am a warner and a bringer of good news to you from Him. Ask you Lord for forgiveness and then turn in repentance to Him"

[*Hūd* (11): 2-3]

وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ
أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۚ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ ٱعْبُدُوا ٱللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ
غَيْرُهُۥٓ ۖ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا مُفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ يَٰقَوْمِ لَآ أَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
أَجْرًا ۖ إِنْ أَجْرِىَ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلَّذِى فَطَرَنِىٓ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾
وَيَٰقَوْمِ ٱسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوٓا إِلَيْهِ

"And to 'Ād we sent their brother Hūd. He said, 'My people! Worship Allāh, there is none worthy of worship save Him; you are merely inventors of falsehood. My people! I do not ask you for any wage for it, my wage is the responsibility of Him who brought me into being, will you not use your intellect? My people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and then to turn to Him in repentance'"

[*Hūd* (11): 50-52]

فَٱسْتَقِيمُوٓا إِلَيْهِ وَٱسْتَغْفِرُوهُ

"So take a straight course to Him and ask His forgiveness"

[*Fuṣṣilat* (41): 6]

The Prophet (ﷺ) advised us to say at the end of the gathering,

«سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ، أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ».

"Glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; all praise is due to You. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped save You, I ask Your forgiveness and turn to You."

If the gathering was one of mercy, this supplication

> would be like a seal to it; if the gathering was one in which idle speech was indulged in, this supplication would serve as expiation for it.[13]

It is also reported that he (ﷺ) used to say upon completing ablution,

«أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ. .».

> I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped save Allāh, who has no partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger.

«اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنَ التَّوَّابِينَ وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنَ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ».

> O Allāh! Make me amongst the penitent and make me amongst those who purify themselves.[14]

This supplication comprises *tawḥīd* and seeking forgiveness and it commences with the two testifications that form the foundation of this religion—that we not worship any save Allāh and we do not obey any save His Messenger. It is also reported that he (ﷺ) would say,

«سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ، أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ».

> Glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; all praise is due to You. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped save You, I ask

[13] The referencing for this follows.

[14] Muslim [#234] and Abū Dāwūd [#169, 170]

Your forgiveness and turn to You.[15]

This is the supplication that serves as expiation for a gathering and has been legislated to be said at the end of a gathering and upon the completion of ablution. Similarly the Prophet (ﷺ) would say at the end of his prayer,

«اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي مَا قَدَّمْتُ، وَمَا أَخَّرْتُ، وَمَا أَسْرَرْتُ، وَمَا أَعْلَنْتُ، وَمَا أَسْرَفْتُ، وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنِّي. أَنْتَ الْمُقَدِّمُ، وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤَخِّرُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ».

> O Allāh! Forgive me for my previous and later [sins], what I have done in secret and in open, for that of which You know better than I, You are the One who brings forward and leaves behind. There is none worthy of worship save You.[16]

Here he (ﷺ) commenced with supplication and ended with the testification of *tawḥīd*, this because it is legislated to supplicate at the end of the prayer, so he ended with the testification [rather than started with it]. In other cases [such as the previous one], this was not the intent in which case commencing with *tawḥīd* is the better course.

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[15] at-Tirmidhī [#3433] and Aḥmad [#8818, 10415] on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

Similar aḥādīth are reported on the authority of Sā'ib by Aḥmad [#15729]; 'Abdullāh bin 'Amr and Abū Barza by Abū Dāwūd [#4858, 4859]; 'Ā'ishah and Jubayr by an-Nasā'ī [3/71-72]; Anas by al-Bazzār [#3123]; Rāfi' by an-Nasā'ī, *'Amal* [#427]; ibn Mas'ūd by at-Ṭabarānī [#4445]; and Zubayr by at-Ṭabarānī, *as-Ṣaghīr* [#970].

It was declared ṣaḥīḥ by ibn Ḥibbān [#594], al-Ḥākim [#1969-1971], adh-Dhahabī, and al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ at-Targhīb* [#1516].

[16] Muslim [#771] and Abū Dāwūd [#760, 761]

The type of supplication which comprises praise is better than that type of supplication that comprises request and asking, however in some specific circumstances it could be that the latter is better than the former due to some external factor. Similarly prayer is better than recitation, recitation is better than remembrance (*dhikr*), and remembrance is better than the supplication of request, yet despite this there could be circumstances, times or places, in which the latter are better than former. The beginning of this religion, its end, its outer, and its inner is all *tawḥīd*, and making ones religion sincerely for the sake of Allāh alone is the actualisation of 'None has the right to be worshipped save Allāh'.

The Correct understanding of *Tawḥīd*

The Muslims, even though all of them testify to it, differ greatly in their actualisation of it. Some think that *tawḥīd* is merely to believe that Allāh is the creator of everything and its Lord[17] and hence end up not differentiating between that aspect of *tawḥīd* which even the polytheists affirmed and the *tawḥīd* which the Messengers called to, the *tawḥīd* of singling out Allāh alone for worship;[18] they do not combine between *tawḥīd* of belief and *tawḥīd* of deed.

The polytheists never said that the creation was created by two gods, nor that there was a god alongside Allāh who created any aspect of it, instead they would say as Allāh informed us about them,

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ ٱللَّهُ

[17] i.e. they only affirm *Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbiyyah.*

[18] i.e. *Tawḥīd al-Ilāhiyyah* or *Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah*

"If you asked them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' They would say, 'Allāh'"

[*Luqmān* (31): 25]

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُم بِٱللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُم مُّشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

"Most of them do not have faith in Allāh without associating others with Him"

[*Yūsuf* (12): 106]

قُل لِّمَنِ ٱلْأَرْضُ وَمَن فِيهَآ إِن
كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۚ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ
﴿٨٥﴾ قُلْ مَن رَّبُّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ ٱلسَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱلْعَظِيمِ
﴿٨٦﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۚ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ قُلْ مَنۢ بِيَدِهِۦ
مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِن
كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۚ قُلْ فَأَنَّىٰ تُسْحَرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

"Say, 'To whom does the earth belong and everyone in it, if you have any knowledge?' They will say, 'To Allāh.' Say, 'Will you not then take heed?' Say, 'Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Mighty Throne?' They will say, 'Allāh.' Say, 'Will you not then fear Him?' Say, 'In whose hand is the dominion over everything, He who gives protection and from whom no protection can be given, if you have any knowledge?' They will say, 'Allāh's.' Say, 'So how have you been bewitched?'"

[*al-Mu'minūn* (23): 84-89]

Yet despite their belief that Allāh alone was the creator, they set up gods alongside Him, deities they appointed as intercessors between them and Him saying, 'We only worship them that they may draw us closer to Allāh' and they would love them as they should have loved Allāh. Committing *shirk* in ones love, worship,

supplication, and request[19] is something separate from committing *shirk* in belief and affirmation [of the existence of Allāh], as He, Exalted is He, says,

وَمِنَ
ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ ٱللَّهِ
وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلَّهِ

> "Some people set up equals with Allāh, loving them as they should love Allāh. But those who have faith have greater love for Allāh"
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2): 165]

So whoever loves any object of creation as he should love Allāh, has committed *shirk* and has taken partners besides Allāh, loving them as he should love Allāh, even if he believes that Allāh is the sole creator. This is the reason why Allāh and His Messenger (ﷺ) differentiated between one who loves an object of creation for the sake of Allāh and one who loves an object of creation alongside Allāh. The first person appoints Allāh alone as his object of worship and absolute love and loves no other alongside Him; but when he comes to know that Allāh loves His Prophets and righteous servants, he too loves them for this reason; similarly when he comes to know that Allāh loves the performance of the legislated and the abandonment of the prohibited, he too loves this. Therefore his love for these matters is an offshoot of his love for Allāh, arising by virtue of it and therefore part of his love for Allāh.[20] This is totally the opposite to the one who sets up partners

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[19] i.e. *shirk* in deeds

[20] The author, *Majmū' Fatāwā* [10/48-49] says, 'Loving Allāh and His Messenger is from the greatest obligations of faith and the greatest of its foundations, indeed it is the source of every action of faith and religion just as belief is the

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besides Allāh, placing his hope and fear in them[21], or obeys them without knowing that obeying them is to obey Allāh, or takes them as intercessors without knowing that Allāh has granted permission for this. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ
مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ شُفَعَٰٓؤُنَا
عِندَ ٱللَّهِ

"They worship, instead of Allāh, what can neither harm them nor help them, saying, 'These are our intercessors with Allāh'"

[*Yūnus* (10): 18]

ٱتَّخَذُوٓا۟ أَحْبَارَهُمْ
وَرُهْبَٰنَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْمَسِيحَ ٱبْنَ
مَرْيَمَ وَمَآ أُمِرُوٓا۟ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوٓا۟ إِلَٰهًا وَٰحِدًا
لَّآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَٰنَهُۥ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

"They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allāh, and also the Messiah, son of Mary. Yet

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source of every statement of faith and religion. Every single motion arises as a result of love, be it praiseworthy or blameworthy. Therefore all actions of faith and religion arise only as a result of praiseworthy love, the foundation of which is the love of Allāh, Exalted is He. Allāh does not accept any action that is not done seeking His face and therefore any action that arises as a result of blameworthy love is not righteous in the Sight of Allāh.'

[21] The author, *Majmū' Fatāwā* [10/61] says, 'Now if love is the foundation of every religious action, hope and fear then arise as a consequence of it and furthermore lead to it. Every person who hopes in something does so because he loves it, every person who fears something runs from the object of fear in order to attain something beloved.'

> they were commanded to worship only one God; there is none worthy of worship save Him! Glory be to Him above anything they associate with Him!"
>
> [*at-Tawbah* (9): 31]

'Adī bin Ḥātim said to Prophet (ﷺ), 'But they never worshipped them' to which he replied, They made the lawful unlawful for them and they obeyed them. That was their worship of them.[22]

Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَٰٓؤُا۟ شَرَعُوا۟ لَهُم مِّنَ ٱلدِّينِ
مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنۢ بِهِ ٱللَّهُ

> "Or do they have partners who have laid down a religion for them for which Allāh has not given any authority?"
>
> [*ash-Shūrā* (42): 21]

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[22] at-Tirmidhī [#3095] and at-Ṭabarānī, *al-Kabīr* [#218, 219].

At-Tirmidhī said that it was gharīb and it was declared ḥasan by al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ at-Tirmidhī* [#2471].

The author said in explanation to this ḥadīth, 'These people are of two types: *The First*: Those who know that their leaders have altered the religion and they follow them in their alteration, therefore they believe in the lawfulness of what Allāh has made unlawful and the unlawfulness of what Allāh has made lawful, following thereby these leaders of theirs while knowing that they are opposing the religion of the Messengers. This is disbelief and Allāh and His Messenger have declared it to be *shirk*...*The Second*: They still have the belief in the lawfulness of what Allāh made lawful and the unlawfulness of what Allāh made unlawful, but they followed them in disobeying Allāh, in the same way that the Muslim may commit a sin while knowing it to be so. These people have the same ruling as the sinners and the Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Obedience is only in the good"'—Āli ash-Shaykh [p. 91]

وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ ٱلظَّالِمُ عَلَىٰ يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ
يَٰلَيْتَنِى ٱتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ ٱلرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٧﴾ يَٰوَيْلَتَىٰ لَيْتَنِى لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ
فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا ﴿٢٨﴾ لَّقَدْ أَضَلَّنِى عَنِ ٱلذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَآءَنِى ۗ
وَكَانَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ لِلْإِنسَٰنِ خَذُولًا ﴿٢٩﴾

"The Day when a wrongdoer will bite his hands and say, 'Alas for me! If only I had gone the way of the Messenger! Alas for me! If only I had not taken so-and-so for a friend! He led me astray from the Reminder after it came to me.' Satan always leaves man in the lurch!"
[*al-Furqān* (25): 27-29]

al-Rubūbiyyah and *al-Ilāhiyyah*

The point of this discussion is to show the state of a servant, whose servitude is only for Allāh, who worships Him and asks Him for help and therefore lives His saying,

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

"You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help"
[*al-Fātiḥah* (1): 5]

who lives and actualises *Tawḥīd ar-Ilāhiyyah* and *Tawḥīd ar-Rubūbiyyah.* Now, even though *al-Ilāhiyyah* includes *ar-Rubūbiyyah* and *ar-Rubūbiyyah* necessitates *al-Ilāhiyyah*,[23] when mentioned together they take on their specific meanings, as in His sayings,

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[23] The belief that Allāh is the creator, nourisher, sustainer—the Lord—necessarily leads one to realise that He alone should be worshipped, hence *Rubūbiyyah* leads to *Ilāhiyyah.* The fact that one worships Allāh alone and nothing else is because he has come to believe that only Allāh is the creator, sustainer etc., hence *Ilāhiyyah* includes *Rubūbiyyah.*

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ ٱلنَّاسِ ﴿١﴾ مَلِكِ ٱلنَّاسِ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَٰهِ ٱلنَّاسِ ﴿٣﴾

"Say, 'I take refuge with the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind...'"

[*an-Nās* (114): 1-3]

ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

"All praise and thanks are due for Allāh the Lord of the worlds"

[*al-Fātiḥah* (1): 2]

thereby mentioning the name Allāh and Lord, for Allāh is the One who is worshipped and deserves to be worshipped and the Lord is the One who regulates the affairs of His servants and sustains them. This is why worship is linked to the name Allāh and asking linked to the name, Lord; this is because worship is the goal for which creation was created and hence *Ilāhiyyah* is the objective, *Rubūbiyyah* comprises within it the creation of the creation and hence deals with their point of commencement.[24] When

[24] As-Sa 'di, *Tafsīr* says, 'The Lord is the One Who nourishes and sustains the whole of the Creation, meaning everything besides Allāh, by the very fact of His creating them, His preparing for them all that they need and His favouring them with great blessings which if removed would also remove any possibility of the creation surviving. Therefore every blessing they possess is from Him, Exalted is He. His sustaining His creation is of two types: General and Specific. As for the general then it is His creating the Creation, granting them provisions and guiding them to that which would benefit them in order to have them survive in this world. As for the specific then it is His sustaining His friends with faith and making them conform to it, perfecting and completing it for them, repressing all that would make them turn away from it, bridling any hindering factors that may be set up between them and Him, and safe-guarding them from all evil. It is possible that the reason behind the fact that most of the supplications made by the Prophets employed the word 'Lord' was due to it carrying this meaning, for all of the things they desired through their supplications fell under His Specific Lordship.'

the one praying says,

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ۝٥

"You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help"
[*al-Fātiḥah* (1): 5]

he begins by mentioning the objective and then mentions the means to this which is the point of commencement—worship is the objective and asking for help is the means to attaining it. Because worship is linked to the name, Allāh, the legislated phrases of remembrance contain this Name, '*Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar*' for the call to prayer; 'I testify that none has the right to be worshipped save Allāh' for the testification to Islām; 'All pure and good works are for Allāh' in the *tashahhud*; and '*SubḥānAllāh, al-Ḥamdulillāh, Lā ilāha illAllāh, Allāhu Akbar.*'

As for request, frequently do we find that it is done with the name, Lord,

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
ٱلْخَٰسِرِينَ ۝٢٣

"[They said;] 'Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost'"
[*al-A'rāf* (7): 23]

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّىٓ أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْـَٔلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِى بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ

"[He said;] 'My Lord! I take refuge with You from asking You for anything about which I have no knowledge...'"
[*Hūd* (11): 47]

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّى ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِى فَٱغْفِرْ لِى

"[He prayed;] 'My Lord! I have wronged myself so forgive me'"

[*al-Qaṣaṣ* (28): 16]

رَبَّنَآ إِنِّيٓ أَسۡكَنتُ مِن ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيۡرِ ذِي زَرۡعٍ عِندَ بَيۡتِكَ
ٱلۡمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ

"...[Ibrāhīm prayed;] 'Our Lord! I have settled my off-spring by Your Sacred House in an uncultivated valley. Our Lord! Let them establish the prayer...'"

[*Ibrāhīm* (14): 37]

وَإِذۡ يَرۡفَعُ إِبۡرَٰهِـۧمُ ٱلۡقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ ٱلۡبَيۡتِ وَإِسۡمَٰعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلۡ
مِنَّآۖ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلۡعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٧﴾

"...[He prayer;] 'Our Lord! Accept this from us! You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing...'"

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 127]

رَبَّنَآ ءَاتِنَا فِي ٱلدُّنۡيَا
حَسَنَةٗ وَفِي ٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ حَسَنَةٗ وَقِنَا عَذَابَ ٱلنَّارِ ﴿٢٠١﴾

"'Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire'"

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 201]

It is reported that Mālik said, 'I dislike that a person say while supplicating, "O My Master! O My Master! O Ḥannān! O Ḥannān!" Rather he should supplicate as the Prophets supplicated, "Our Lord! Our Lord!"' Recorded by al-'Utbī, *al-'Utbiyyah*. Allāh, Exalted is He, says concerning those bestowed depth of understanding,

ٱلَّذِينَ يَذۡكُرُونَ ٱللَّهَ قِيَٰمٗا وَقُعُودٗا
وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمۡ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلۡقِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ
رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقۡتَ هَٰذَا بَٰطِلٗا سُبۡحَٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ ٱلنَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾

> "...those who remember Allāh standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Our Lord! You have not created this for nothing. Glory be to You! Safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire...'"
>
> [*Āli 'Imrān* (3): 191]

So when a servant wishes to ask, it is befitting that he ask employing the name, 'Lord', however were he to employ the name, 'Allāh' because this name includes within its boundaries the name, 'Lord', this is good. When a servant wishes to worship, the name 'Allāh' is more befitting to be used. When one begins by praising Allāh, he should mention the name, 'Allāh' and when he wishes to supplicate, he should mention the name, 'Lord'; this is why Yūnus said,

لَّآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنتَ سُبْحَٰنَكَ إِنِّي كُنتُ مِنَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

> "[Yūnus prayed;] 'None has the right to be worshipped save You; glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; I have been amongst the wrong-doers.'"
>
> [*al-Anbiyā'* (21): 87]

while Ādam said,

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ ٱلْخَٰسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

> "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost."
>
> [*al-A'rāf* (7): 23]

This is because Yūnus (*'alayhis-salām*) left in a state of exasperation and Allāh, Exalted is He says,

فَٱصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُن كَصَاحِبِ ٱلْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَىٰ وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ ﴿٤٨﴾

"So wait steadfastly for the judgment of your Lord and do not be like the Companion of the Fish"

[*al-Qalam* (68): 48]

فَٱلْتَقَمَهُ ٱلْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

"Then the fish devoured him and he was to blame"

[*as-Ṣāffāt* (37): 142]

hence he committed that which he could be reprimanded for, therefore it was befitting for him to begin by praising his Lord and to acknowledge that none deserves to be worshipped save Him, implying that ones desires should not be submitted to for in doing so leads to the weakening of worshipping Allāh alone. It is reported that Yūnus (*'alayhis-salām*) felt remorse at the punishment being lifted from his people after he had threatened them with it, he feared that they would accuse him of lying and hence left them in a state of exasperation. It was because of this that he said,

لَّآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنتَ

"There is none worthy of worship save You..."

[*al-Anbiyā'* (21): 87]

these words absolve any besides Allāh of godship, be it by way of submitting to the desires of the soul or obeying an object of creation, this is why he went on to say,

سُبْحَٰنَكَ إِنِّى كُنتُ مِنَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

"...glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; I have been amongst the wrong-doers"

[*al-Anbiyā'* (21): 87]

the servant says these words on occasions when he assumes something to be other than what it is or desires something that is not good. As for Ādam, he first confessed his sin by saying,

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ ٱلْخَٰسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

> "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost"
>
> [*al-A'rāf* (7): 23]

there was no one with Ādam who was competing with godship who would take from him the desire to do what Allāh ordered, rather he thought that Satan spoke the truth when he said,

وَقَاسَمَهُمَآ إِنِّى لَكُمَا لَمِنَ ٱلنَّٰصِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَلَّىٰهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ

> "He swore to them, 'I am one of those who give good advice.' So he enticed them to do it by means of trickery"
>
> [*al-A'rāf* (7): 21-22]

Satan deceived them and made out that he was a sincere advisor to them, therefore when they accepted this from him, it befitted their condition to say,

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ ٱلْخَٰسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

> "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost"
>
> [*al-A'rāf* (7): 23]

due to their negligence, not due to their submitting to their base

desire or in pursuit of some temporal benefit that would contend with godship; these two were in need of having their knowledge and intent perfected; hence they confessed their need of their Lord besides whom none could fulfil their need.

So Dhū-n-Nūn confessed his negligence in fulfilling the duties of *Ilāhiyyah* by virtue of his leaving his people in a state of exasperation, in a state where he disliked the fact that his people were saved, hence desiring something that contended with his love of Allāh. When the servant says, 'None has the right to be worshipped save You' he is clearing his heart of worshipping his desires. It is reported, There is no god worshipped under the expanse of the heaven which is more severe in the sight of Allāh then desires that are submitted to.[25]

Therefore Yūnus (*'alayhis-salām*) perfected his *Ilāhiyyah* of Allāh and removed any intent to follow his desires, hence there was nothing left in his heart that would contend with the *Ilāhiyyah* of the Truth, indeed he was from amongst those who made the religion sincerely for Allāh, being one of the greatest chosen servants of Allāh.

It is possible that the likes of this situation occur to someone and after its passing, there remain in him some type of exasperation, anger to the decree, or some evil whispers concerning His wisdom and mercy. In this case the servant stands in need of absolving himself of two matters: corrupt intent and corrupt desires. He should know that wisdom and justice lies in what was decreed for

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[25] At-Ṭabarānī [#7502] and ibn Abī 'Āṣim [#3] on the authority of Abū Umāmah.

It is mawḍū' as ruled by ibn al-Jawzī and endorsed by adh-Dhahabī, *Tartīb al-Mawḍū'āt* [#956] and al-Albānī; al-Haythamī [1/188] said that its isnād contains a matrūk narrator.

him, not in what he thinks should have happened, hence his desires should be compliant to the order of Allāh such that he ends in a state that feels no opposition to His order,

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا
فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

> "No, by your Lord, they are not believers until they make you their judge in the disputes that break out between them, and then find no resistance within themselves to what you decide and submit themselves completely"
>
> [*an-Nisā'* (4): 65]

It is reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, By the One in whose hand is my soul, none of you believes until his very desire conforms to what I have brought. Reported by Abū Ḥātim in his Ṣaḥīḥ.[26]

In the Ṣaḥīḥ it is recorded that 'Umar said, 'O Messenger of Allāh! By Allāh you are more beloved to me than myself' to which he (ﷺ) said, Now O 'Umar![27]

In the Ṣaḥīḥ it is recorded that he (ﷺ) said, None of you believes until I am more beloved to him than his father, son and the whole of mankind.[28]

Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

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[26] Ibn Abī 'Āṣim [#15] and ad-Daylamī [#7960] with a ḍa'īf isnād as ruled by ibn Rajab, *Jāmi'* [#41].

[27] Bukhārī [#3694, 6264, 6632] and Abū Dāwūd [#2942]

[28] Bukhārī [#15] and Muslim [#44]

قُلْ إِن كَانَ ءَابَآؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَآؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَٰنُكُمْ وَأَزْوَٰجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَٰلٌ ٱقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَٰرَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَٰكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَآ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ وَجِهَادٍ فِى سَبِيلِهِۦ فَتَرَبَّصُوا۟ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِىَ ٱللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِۦ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلْفَٰسِقِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

"Say, 'If your fathers, or your sons, or your brothers, or your wives, or your tribe, or any wealth you have acquired, or any business you fear may slump, or any house which pleases you, are dearer to you that Allāh and His Messenger and striving hard in His Cause, then wait until Allāh brings about His command...'"

[*at-Tawbah* (9): 24]

So if *Īmān* is not attained except through the servant taking the Messenger (ﷺ) as judge and fully accepting his judgment, that his desire comply to what he has brought, that the Messenger and striving hard in His Cause take precedence over the love he has for himself, his property and family, what then would one say with respect to Allāh?!

Therefore whoever sees a people who he thinks deserve to be punished, but Allāh forgives them and shows mercy to them, and he finds a dislike for this, this is due to one of two reasons: his desire opposes the order of Allāh or his presumption opposes the knowledge of Allāh and Allāh is All-Knowing, All-Wise. When you truly come to know that He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, all causes for dislike dissolve and disappear. As for those matters that He has ordered us to dislike such as disbelief, sin, and transgression; we are required to obey Him in this. But these matters

are not like his lifting the punishment from a people for this is an action of His that we cannot dislike; instead we are required to like it. For a person to dislike such matters is to follow a desire that contends with *Ilāhiyyah*, in such a case the servant must complete his *tawḥīd* by saying, 'None has the right to be worshipped save You.' It is upon us to love what He loves, to be content with what He is pleased with, to order what He orders, and prohibit what He prohibits. So for example if He loves those who repent and those who purify themselves, it is upon us to love them as well.

Repentance

The ḥadīth of repentance is established in the Ṣaḥīḥ, Allāh shows more joy at the repentance of His servant than a man who encamps at a dangerous place, with him is his riding beast carrying his food and drink. He rests his head and falls asleep for a short while and awakes to find his animal missing, [he searches for it] until he is very thirsty and hungry and decides to go back to his place where he once again falls asleep. When he awakes the second time he finds his animal standing besides him.[29]

Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلتَّوَّٰبِينَ وَيُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ﴿٢٢٢﴾

"Allāh loves those who turn in repentance and loves those who purify themselves"

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 222]

إِلَّا مَن تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَٰلِحًا
فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ ٱللَّهُ سَيِّـَٔاتِهِمْ حَسَنَٰتٍ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ غَفُورًا
رَّحِيمًا ﴿٧٠﴾

[29] Bukhārī [#6309] and Muslim [#2747]

> "...except for those who turn in repentance and have faith and work righteous deeds, Allāh will transfer the wrong actions of such people into good—Allāh is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful"
>
> [*al-Furqān* (25): 70]

There is a ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ which mentions that Allāh would present the minor sins of a person to him on the Day of Judgment and withhold the major sins, and he would admit to them, all the while fearing that his major sins were soon to be presented, upon which Allāh would say, "I have forgiven you and altered every evil deed to a good deed." He will say, 'But my Lord! I have committed sins that I have not yet been seen!'[30]

meaning that when he saw his bad deeds being altered, he then wished to see his major sins, which he was previously in fear of, so that they too could be altered to good deeds. It is known that his state after this alteration is much greater than the state he would have been in had he not committed the sins and had there been no alteration.

A group of the *Salaf*, amongst whom was Saʿīd bin Jubair, said, 'A servant could perform a good deed and enter Hell on account of it, and a servant could commit a sin and enter Paradise on account of it. The first performed the good deed and became boastful and exultant to such an extent that he entered Hell, the second committed the sin and remained in fear of it and persisted in asking for forgiveness until he entered Paradise.' Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

[30] Muslim [#190] and at-Tirmidhī [#2596]

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَن يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا
الْإِنسَانُ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ﴿٧٢﴾ لِيُعَذِّبَ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ
وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ وَيَتُوبَ اللَّهُ
عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٧٣﴾

> "We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains but they refused to take it on and shrank from it. But man took it on, he is indeed wrongdoing and ignorant. This was so that Allāh might punish the men and women of the hypocrites and the men and women of the polytheists, and turn towards the men and women of the believers. Allāh is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful"
>
> [*al-Aḥzāb* (33): 72-73]

The objective of every person is to be amongst those believers, male and female, whom Allāh has forgiven.

This opinion[31] is proven by countless texts from the Book, the authentic Sunnah and the Books that were revealed before the Qur'ān. Those who reject this opinion interpret these texts with interpretations that resemble those of the Jahmiyyah[32], Qadariyyah[33] and Dahriyyah[34] to the texts concerning the Names and Attributes of Allāh, the texts concerning the decree, and the texts concerning the resurrection. They are of the same nature as the

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[31] i.e. that Prophets can commit sins.

[32] An early sect that denied the Names and Attributes of Allāh, followers of Jahm bin Ṣafwān.

interpretations of the Qarāmiṭa[35], known by necessity to be false. They amount to distorting words from their correct context, it is even possible that some of those who do this, even though they intend to honour and exalt the Prophets, fall into denial or disbelief of them.

Moreover, the infallibility which is proven by the texts of the Legal Law, the intellect, and consensus, is their infallibility in conveying the message. This is of no benefit to them as they do not accept the meanings of what the Prophets conveyed, instead they distort the texts or they end up being like the illiterate who know nothing of the Book except their own assumptions.

Allāh, Exalted is He, frequently mentions the repentance of the Prophets and their asking forgiveness. Ādam and his wife said,

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
ٱلْخَٰسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

> "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost"
>
> [*al-A'rāf* (7): 23]

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[33] An early sect that denied *qadr*, or divine decree, stating instead the man has a complete free will.

[34] A sect that denied the reality of the Resurrection, Judgment, Paradise, and Hell.

[35] A sect, branching off from the Shī'a, that based itself around esoteric exegesis of the Qur'ān and Aḥādīth, stating that texts commanding prayer and zakāt etc. were all merely metaphors.

Nūḥ said,

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّيٓ أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْـَٔلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِى بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِى وَتَرْحَمْنِيٓ أَكُن مِّنَ ٱلْخَٰسِرِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

"My Lord! I take refuge with You from asking You for anything about which I have no knowledge. If You do not forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be among the lost"

[*Hūd* (11): 47]

al-Khalīl said,

رَبَّنَا ٱغْفِرْ لِى وَلِوَٰلِدَىَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ ٱلْحِسَابُ ﴿٤١﴾

"Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day the Reckoning takes place"

[*Ibrāhīm* (14): 41]

وَٱلَّذِىٓ أَطْمَعُ أَن يَغْفِرَ لِى خَطِيٓـَٔتِى يَوْمَ ٱلدِّينِ

"...He who I sincerely hope will forgive my mistakes on the Day of Reckoning"

[*ash-Shu'arā'* (26): 82]

Mūsā said,

أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَٱغْفِرْ لَنَا وَٱرْحَمْنَا ۖ وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ ٱلْغَٰفِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَٱكْتُبْ لَنَا فِى هَٰذِهِ ٱلدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِى ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدْنَآ إِلَيْكَ

"...You are our protector so forgive us and have mercy on us. You are the Best of Forgivers. Prescribe for us good in this world and the Hereafter, we have truly turned to You"

[*al-A'rāf* (7): 155-156]

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّى ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِى فَٱغْفِرْ لِى فَغَفَرَ لَهُۥٓ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦﴾

"My Lord! I have wronged myself so forgive me..."

[*al-Qaṣaṣ* (28): 16]

فَلَمَّآ أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَٰنَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا۠ أَوَّلُ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

"When he regained consciousness he said, 'Glory be to You! I turn to you in repentance and I am the first of the believers'"

[*al-A'rāf* (7): 143]

Allāh, Exalted is He, informs us of Dāwūd that he,

فَٱسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُۥ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ

"Begged forgiveness from his Lord and fell down prone, prostrating, and repented"

[*Ṣād* (38): 24-25]

Sulaymān said,

قَالَ رَبِّ ٱغْفِرْ لِى وَهَبْ لِى مُلْكًا لَّا يَنۢبَغِى لِأَحَدٍ مِّنۢ بَعْدِىٓ ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلْوَهَّابُ ﴿٣٥﴾

"My Lord! Forgive me and give me a kingdom the like of which will never be granted to anyone after me. Truly You are the Ever-Giving"

[*Ṣād* (38): 35]

As for Yūsuf, the sincerely truthful, Allāh did not mention any sin of his, and this is why no mention is made of repentance from him, instead He said,

كَذَٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ ٱلسُّوٓءَ
وَٱلْفَحْشَآءَ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا ٱلْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

"That happened so We might avert from him all evil and lust. He was Our chosen servant"

[*Yūsuf* (12): 24]

So He informed us that he turned evil and indecency away from him and this proves that he committed neither. As for His saying,

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِۦ ۖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَآ أَن رَّءَا بُرْهَٰنَ رَبِّهِۦ ۚ

"She wanted him and he would have wanted her had he not seen the Clear Proof of his Lord"

[*Yūsuf* (12): 24]

The word 'desire' (*hamm*) is a generic noun (*ism jins*) and it falls into two categories as Imām Aḥmad said, 'Desire is of two types: a desire that is merely thoughts, and a desire that one commits and persists in.' It is established in the Ṣaḥīḥ that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,When a servant desires to commit a sin, nothing is recorded against him, if he then leaves that sin for the sake of Allāh, one good deed is recorded for him, if he commits that sin, one sin is recorded for him, if he leaves that sin, but not for the sake of Allāh, no sin or reward is recorded for him.[36]

So Yūsuf (*'alayhis-salām*) had a desire which he abandoned for the sake of Allāh and this is why Allāh turned him away from evil and indecency by virtue of his sincerity. Hence, this *'turning away'* occurs when the cause for committing sin is present, i.e. desire, yet contending with this is one's sincerity to Allāh. So Yūsuf

[36] The author, may Allāh have mercy upon him, has quoted the ḥadīth in meaning. It is recorded by Bukhārī [#7501] and Muslim [#128-130]

(*ʿalayhis-salām*) did nothing except good deeds for which he would be rewarded for, Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

﴿ وَمَآ أُبَرِّئُ نَفۡسِيٓۚ إِنَّ ٱلنَّفۡسَ لَأَمَّارَةُۢ بِٱلسُّوٓءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ
رَبِّيٓۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٞ ﴿٥٣﴾

> "As for those who have *taqwā*, when they are bothered by visitors from Satan, they remember and immediately see clearly"
>
> [*al-Aʿrāf* (7): 201]

As for what is reported that he untied his lower garment and they both got into the position for intercourse at which point he saw the image of Yāʿqūb biting his hand, and the likes of these reports, none of them have been told us by Allāh or His Messenger. Hence such reports were taken by the Muslims from the Jewish scriptures which have no basis and are considered the greatest lies against the Prophets and the most severe in accusing them.

As for His saying,

وَقَالَ ٱلۡمَلِكُ ٱئۡتُونِي بِهِۦٓ أَسۡتَخۡلِصۡهُ
لِنَفۡسِيۖ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُۥ قَالَ إِنَّكَ ٱلۡيَوۡمَ لَدَيۡنَا مَكِينٌ أَمِينٞ ﴿٥٤﴾

> "I do not say that my self was free from blame, the self indeed commands to evil acts—except for those my Lord has mercy on"
>
> [*Yūsuf* (12): 53]

these are the words of the wife of al-ʿAzīz as is clearly proven by the Qur'ān,

وَقَالَ ٱلْمَلِكُ ٱئْتُونِى
بِهِۦ ۖ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُ ٱلرَّسُولُ قَالَ ٱرْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَسْـَٔلْهُ مَا بَالُ
ٱلنِّسْوَةِ ٱلَّٰتِى قَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّى بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾ قَالَ
مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ إِذْ رَٰوَدتُّنَّ يُوسُفَ عَن نَّفْسِهِۦ ۚ قُلْنَ حَٰشَ لِلَّهِ
مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِن سُوٓءٍ ۚ قَالَتِ ٱمْرَأَتُ ٱلْعَزِيزِ ٱلْـَٰٔنَ حَصْحَصَ
ٱلْحَقُّ أَنَا۠ رَٰوَدتُّهُۥ عَن نَّفْسِهِۦ وَإِنَّهُۥ لَمِنَ ٱلصَّٰدِقِينَ ﴿٥١﴾ ذَٰلِكَ
لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّى لَمْ أَخُنْهُ بِٱلْغَيْبِ وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِى كَيْدَ ٱلْخَآئِنِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾
۞ وَمَآ أُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِىٓ ۚ إِنَّ ٱلنَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌۢ بِٱلسُّوٓءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ
رَبِّىٓ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّى غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

"The king said, 'Bring him to me straight away!' But when the envoy came to him, he said, 'Go back to your master and enquire of him what happened about the women who cut their hands. My Lord has knowledge of their cunning guile.' He said, 'What was this past affair of yours when you solicited Yūsuf?' Then they said, 'Allāh forbid! We know no bad of him.' The governor's wife then said, 'The truth has now emerged. Indeed I tried to seduce him then and he has simply told the honest truth. In this way he may know at last that I did not dishonour him behind his back and that Allāh most surely does not guide the deviousness of the dishonourable. I do not say that my self was free from blame, the self indeed commands to evil acts—except for those my Lord has mercy on'"

[*Yūsuf* (12): 50-53]

All of these are the words of the wife, for Yūsuf was still in prison at that time not yet having had an audience with the king, but in his absence his innocence was finally established upon

which the king said,

وَقَالَ ٱلْمَلِكُ ٱئْتُونِى بِهِۦٓ أَسْتَخْلِصْهُ
لِنَفْسِى ۖ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُۥ قَالَ إِنَّكَ ٱلْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

> "...'Bring him to me straight away so I may draw him very close to me.' When he spoke to him, he declared, 'Today you are trusted, established in our sight'"
> [*Yūsuf* (12): 54]

Many exegetes mentioned these words[37] to be the words of Yūsuf, and some of them only mentioned this opinion. This opinion is totally false and has no evidence to support it, indeed the evidences prove the opposite. These matters have been detailed in other places.

The point of this discussion is to show that all that is contained in the story of Dhū-n-Nūn for which he could be censured for, is all forgiven, and furthermore, Allāh altered it all to good deeds and raised his ranks. He was in a much better state after coming out of the belly of the whale and his repentance than he was before. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

فَٱصْبِرْ
لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُن كَصَاحِبِ ٱلْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَىٰ وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ لَّوْلَآ
أَن تَدَٰرَكَهُۥ نِعْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦ لَنُبِذَ بِٱلْعَرَآءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَٱجْتَبَٰهُ رَبُّهُۥ
فَجَعَلَهُۥ مِنَ ٱلصَّٰلِحِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

> "So wait steadfastly for the judgment of your Lord and do not be like the Companion of the Fish when he called out in absolute despair. Had a blessing from his

[37] i.e. the words of [*Yūsuf*: 53], "I do not say that my self was to blame..."

> Lord not overtaken him, he would have been thrown up on the naked shore, for he was at fault. But his Lord chose him and made him one of the righteous"
>
> [*al-Qalam* (68): 48-50]

This was different to his state when he was in the belly of the whale,

فَٱلْتَقَمَهُ ٱلْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

> "Then the fish devoured him and he was to blame"
>
> [*al-Ṣāffāt* (37): 142]

So in this state he was blamed, but he was not in this state when taken out of the belly of the whale, hence his condition after saying,

لَّآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنتَ سُبْحَٰنَكَ إِنِّى كُنتُ مِنَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

> "None has the right to be worshipped save You; glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; I have been amongst the wrong-doers"
>
> [*al-Anbiyā'* (21): 87]

was better than his state before. What is taken into consideration is the perfection of the end state, not what may have occurred in the beginning. Actions are by their conclusions.

Allāh loves those who repent

As regards what is mentioned in some of the Judeao-Christian reports that, 'Allāh said to Dāwūd, 'As for your sin, I have forgiven it, but as for love, this will never return.' Even if this were authentic, it cannot be considered to be legislation for us for the religion of Muḥammad (ﷺ) comes with a repentance that was not meted out to those who came before us, it was for this reason that he said, I

am the Prophet of mercy and I am the Prophet of repentance.[38]

Through him, Allāh lifted many of the difficulties and constraints placed on those who came before us. Allāh, Exalted is He, said in His Book,

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلتَّوَّٰبِينَ وَيُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ﴿٢٢٢﴾

> "Allāh loves those who turn in repentance and loves those who purify themselves"
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2): 222]

He informs us that He shows more joy at the repentance of His servant than one who finds something he has lost that he had dire need of.[39] So if this is the joy and love that Allāh displays at repentance, how can it be said that His love will not return?

[38] at-Tirmidhī, *ash-Shamā'il* [#369] and Aḥmad [#23443, 23445] on the authority of Ḥudhayfah.Similar aḥādīth are recorded on the authority of Jubayr by Bukhārī and Muslim; and Abū Mūsā by Aḥmad [#19525, 19621, 19651]It was declared ṣaḥīḥ by ibn Ḥibbān [#6315]; as-Suyūṭī [#2701] and al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* [#1473]

[39] The author, *al-Istighfār* [p. 66] says, 'This is why it is said that repentance is a station that accompanies the servant throughout his entire life, and everyone is in need of it. The whole of creation must repent and repent continuously. Allāh, Exalted is He, says: "Indeed We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed he was unjust and ignorant. It was so that Allāh may punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the polytheists, men and women, and that Allāh may accept repentance from the believers, men and women" [*al-Aḥzāb* (33): 72-73]

The objective and fulfilment of every believer is repentance. Allāh, Exalted is He, says to the best of the Prophets (ﷺ) and to the best of creation after the Prophets, "Allāh has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār who followed in the hour of difficulty..." [*at-Tawbah* (9): 117]'

وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ ﴿١٤﴾ ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ ﴿١٦﴾

"He is the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Loving, the Possessor of the Throne, the All-Glorious, the Doer of whatever He desires"

[*al-Burūj* (85): 14-16]

His love is in proportion to the efforts that the servant undertakes in trying to draw closer to Allāh after having repented. If the servant strives more after his repentance, the love that Allāh bestows him will be greater than what was bestowed him before, the opposite is also true; the recompense is of the same type as the action,

وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّٰمٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ﴿٤٦﴾

"Your Lord does not wrong His servants"

[*Fuṣṣilat* (41): 46]

The Ṣaḥīḥ records that the Prophet (ﷺ)said, Allāh says, 'Whosoever has mutual animosity with a friend (*walī*) of Mine then I declare war on him. My servant does not draw close to Me with anything as he does by carrying out what I have made obligatory upon him. My servant continues to draw near to Me by performing optional deeds such that I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his leg with which he walks. Were he to ask of Me, I would surely give him and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant it to him. I am never so hesitant to do something as I am to take the soul of my believing servant, he dislikes death and I dislike to harm him but he must die.'[40]

It is known that the best of the *Awliyā'* after the Prophets are the Forerunners amongst the *Muhājirūn* and the *Anṣār*. The love

[40] Bukhārī [#6502] and ibn Ḥibbān [#347]

that our Lord bestowed them after their having repented and accepted Islām was from the greatest of loves and each time they drew closer to Him through performing optional deeds, after having performed the obligatory deeds, this love increased. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

عَسَى ٱللَّهُ أَن يَجْعَلَ
بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ ٱلَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُم مِّنْهُم مَّوَدَّةً وَٱللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ وَٱللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

> "It may well be that Allāh will restore the love between you and those of them who are now your enemies. Allāh is All-Powerful. Allāh is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful"
> [*al-Mumtaḥinah* (60): 7]

This verse was revealed with regards the polytheists who opposed Allāh and His Messenger such as people amongst the Confederates like Abū Sufyān bin Harb[41], Abū Sufyān bin al-Hārith, al-Hārith bin Hishām, Suhail bin 'Amr, 'Ikrimah bin Abū Jahl, Safwān bin Umayyah and others. All of these were people who, after hating Allāh and His Messenger, came to love them in varying degrees, some more than others. It is established in the Ṣaḥīḥ that Umm Mu'āwiyah, Hind, the wife of Abū Sufyān, said, 'O Messenger of Allāh! By Allāh there was no family on the face of this earth that I wished to have disgraced more than yours, but today there is no family that I wish to be honoured more than yours. And the Messenger said something similar.'[42]

It is known that the love one believer feels for another follows on from their love of Allāh, Exalted is He. The most trustworthy and firm handholds of faith are to love for the sake of Allāh and

[41] as-Suyūṭī, *ad-Durr al-Manthūr* [6/205]

[42] Bukhārī [#6641, 3825]

to hate for the sake of Allāh.[43] Loving for the sake of Allāh is from the perfection of *tawḥīd* and and loving others alongside Allāh is shirk. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلَّهِ

> "Some people set up equals with Allāh, loving them as they should love Allāh. But those who have faith have greater love for Allāh"
>
> [*al-Baqarah* (2): 165]

The love that occurred between the Messenger and the believers and those who had previously opposed them was a love that was for the sake of Allāh. Whoever loves Allāh, Allāh loves him, hence it is known that Allāh loved them after their repentance just as they loved Him. How then can it be said, 'The penitent only attains forgiveness but not love'?

Now if someone were to contend with this by saying, 'But those people used to be disbelievers, not knowing that what they previously did was prohibited, but these [Muslims] know what they do is prohibited but still do it!' The response to this is from two angles:

The first: This is not the case, many of the disbelievers know that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh yet oppose him because of jealousy and arrogance. Abū Sufyān had previously already heard

[43] The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, 'The most trustworthy and firm handhold of faith is loving for the sake of Allāh and hating for the sake Allāh.' Recorded by ibn Abī Shaybah [#34338], Aḥmad [4/286] and it is ṣaḥīḥ as per al-Albānī [#1728].

about the Prophet from people such as Umayyah bin Abū as-Salt and Heracles. Not only this but he also informed us that he was always convinced that the Prophet would be victorious, yet still would he oppose him until Allāh caused him to enter Islām, albeit unwillingly. However, after his enmity, many events in his life after this, such as what occurred in the Year of al-Yarmuk, show the excellence of his Islām and his love of Allāh and His Messenger. Allāh, Exalted is He says,

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَٰهًا آخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ
الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ ۚ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ يَلْقَ
أَثَامًا ﴿٦٨﴾ يُضَاعَفْ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَيَخْلُدْ فِيهِ
مُهَانًا ﴿٦٩﴾ إِلَّا مَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا
فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ ۗ

> "...those who do not call on any other god alongside Allāh and do not kill anyone Allāh has made inviolate, except with the right to do so, and do not fornicate; anyone who does that will receive an evil punishment and on the Day of Resurrection his punishment will be doubled and he will be humiliated in it timelessly, forever; except for those who repent, have faith and work righteous deeds: Allāh will transform the wrong actions of such people into good"
>
> [*al-Furqān* (25): 68-70]

Allāh alters their bad deeds for good deeds and good deeds lead to Allāh loving them. This alteration is not only for disbelievers who have accepted Islām for Allāh says,

إِنَّمَا ٱلتَّوْبَةُ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ ٱلسُّوٓءَ بِجَهَٰلَةٍ
ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِن قَرِيبٍ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ يَتُوبُ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَكَانَ
ٱللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٧﴾

"Allāh only accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and the quickly repent after doing it. Allāh turns towards such people, Allāh is All-Knowing, All-Wise"

[*al-Nisā'* (4): 17]

Abū al-'Āliyah said, 'I asked the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) about this verse and they replied that whoever disobeys Allāh is ignorant and whoever repents to Allāh before his death has repented quickly.'[44]

The second: This distinction between the two types of penitent people is a distinction that has no proof in the Book or Sunnah, instead they prove that Allāh loves the penitent and shows joy at their repentance, whether they knew what they were doing was wrong or not.

True Repentance involves a Person Changing Himself

Whoever knows that he has committed a sin and then repents, must change himself so that his state becomes praiseworthy: if he previously hated the truth, he must now love it, and if he loved falsehood, he must now hate it. Whatever the servant has of knowing the truth, loving it, and acting by it; hating falsehood and avoiding it, all of these are matters that are beloved to Allāh

[44] At-Ṭabarī [3/640] and as-Suyūṭī [2/130]

and please Him. The love that Allāh bestows to His servants is in accordance to what they have of those matters that are beloved to Him. Whoever moves from a state of being detested by the Truth to a state of being beloved to Him, Allāh would change his bad deeds for good ones because he changed his state from being blameworthy to being praiseworthy and the reward is of the same type as the action.

So if the penitent person was to conform to what the Truth loves more after his repentance, the Truth would love him more, so how can it be thought that love does not return after repentance?

Through understanding this point one can also answer the doubts raised by those who say that Allāh has never commissioned a Prophet except that he was infallible before his being commissioned. This was the position of some of the Rāfiḍah and others; likewise it answers the doubts raised by those who say that Allāh has never commissioned a Prophet except that he was a believer before his being commissioned. These people think that sins are a cause of deficiency even if one has sincerely repented from them, and this is a great error on their part. This is because the censure and punishment that is meted out to the sinner is not shared at all by the penitent who has repented immediately after his sin; it is however possible that if this person delays his repentance than he could have a portion of the retribution meted out to him.

The Prophets, may Allāh send peace and blessings upon them, would never delay repentance, rather they would rush to it and compete in doing so. They would never delay and they would never persist in committing a sin, indeed they are preserved from this. Whoever amongst them did delay repentance slightly was tried

by Allāh so as to serve as expiation for the delay as was done with Dhū-n-Nūn, may Allāh's peace and blessings be upon him. This according to the opinion of those who stated that he was put in the whale of the belly after being commissioned as a Prophet, as is the famous opinion; in the opinion of those who opine that this was before his prophethood, this explanation is not required.

The one who has repented from disbelief and sin could be better than one who has not fallen into disbelief or sin. If it is possible that he be better, the best is more deserving of a Prophet; Allāh informs us of the brothers of Yūsuf and their sins, yet they became the leaders of the tribes and Allāh commissioned them as Prophets. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

فَـَٔامَنَ لَهُۥ لُوطٌۘ وَقَالَ
إِنِّى مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّىٓ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٦﴾

> "And Lūṭ believed him and said, 'I am leaving this place to follow the pleasure of my Lord...'"
>
> [*al-ʿAnkabūt* (29): 26]

Lūṭ then believed in Ibrāhīm and then Allāh sent Lūṭ to his people. Allāh, Exalted is He, says concerning the story of Shuʿayb,

قَالَ ٱلْمَلَأُ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱسْتَكْبَرُوا۟ مِن قَوْمِهِۦ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ يَـٰشُعَيْبُ
وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مَعَكَ مِن قَرْيَتِنَآ أَوْ لَتَعُودُنَّ فِى مِلَّتِنَا ۚ قَالَ أَوَلَوْ
كُنَّا كَـٰرِهِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾ قَدِ ٱفْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى ٱللَّهِ كَذِبًا إِنْ عُدْنَا فِى مِلَّتِكُم
بَعْدَ إِذْ نَجَّىٰنَا ٱللَّهُ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَا يَكُونُ لَنَآ أَن نَّعُودَ فِيهَآ إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ
ٱللَّهُ رَبُّنَا ۚ وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَىْءٍ عِلْمًا ۚ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا ٱفْتَحْ
بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِٱلْحَقِّ وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ ٱلْفَـٰتِحِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

> "The ruling circle of those of his people who were arrogant said, 'We will drive you out of our city, Shu'ayb, you and those who have believed along with you, unless you return to our religion.' He said, 'What, even though we detest it? We would be inventing lies against Allāh if we returned to your religion after Allāh has saved us from it. We could never return to it unless Allāh, our Lord, so willed. Our Lord encompasses everything in His knowledge. We have put our trust in Allāh, our Lord! Judge between us and our people with truth, You are the best of judges'"
>
> [*al-A'rāf* (7): 88-89]

وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِنَآ أَوْ لَتَعُودُنَّ فِى مِلَّتِنَا ۖ فَأَوْحَىٰٓ إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَنُسْكِنَنَّكُمُ ٱلْأَرْضَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِى وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ ﴿١٤﴾

> "Those who were disbelievers said to their Messengers, 'We will drive you from our land unless you return to our religion.' Their Lord revealed to them, 'We will destroy those who do wrong and we will leave you in the land to live in after them. That is the reward of those who fear My station and fear My threat'"
>
> [*Ibrāhīm* (14): 13-14]

So when it becomes known that consideration is given to the perfection of the conclusion and this perfection is only attained through repentance; every servant is in dire need of repentance and it is obligatory upon the first and the last. Allāh, Exalted is He, said,

لِّيُعَذِّبَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ
وَٱلْمُنَٰفِقَٰتِ وَٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَٱلْمُشْرِكَٰتِ وَيَتُوبَ ٱللَّهُ
عَلَى ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ ۗ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًۢا ﴿٧٣﴾

"This was so that Allāh might punish the men and women of the hypocrites and the men and women of the polytheists, and turn towards the men and women of the believers. Allāh is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful"

[*al-Aḥzāb* (33): 73]

Allāh, Glorious is He, informs us of the repentance of Ādam, Nūḥ, and those who came after them until the Seal of the Messengers, Muḥammad (ﷺ). From amongst the last verses to be revealed to him, or the last verses to be revealed to him, were,

إِذَا جَآءَ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْفَتْحُ ﴿١﴾ وَرَأَيْتَ ٱلنَّاسَ
يَدْخُلُونَ فِى دِينِ ٱللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا ﴿٢﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ
وَٱسْتَغْفِرْهُ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ تَوَّابًۢا ﴿٣﴾

"When Allāh's help and victory have arrived and you have seen the people entering Allāh's religion in droves, then glorify your Lord's praises and ask His forgiveness, He is the Ever-Returning"

[*an-Naṣr* (110): 1-3]

The Two Ṣaḥīḥs record the ḥadīth of 'Ā'ishah, may Allāh be pleased with her, that the Prophet (ﷺ) would frequently say in his bowing and prostration,

«سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا وَبِحَمْدِكَ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي»

Glory be to You, O Allāh, our Lord, far removed are You from any imperfection, all praise and thanks are

due to You. O Allāh! Forgive me.

Thereby implementing the Qur'ān.[45]

Before this verse, Allāh revealed,

لَّقَد تَّابَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَى
ٱلنَّبِيِّ وَٱلۡمُهَٰجِرِينَ وَٱلۡأَنصَارِ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّبَعُوهُ فِي
سَاعَةِ ٱلۡعُسۡرَةِ مِنۢ بَعۡدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ فَرِيقٖ
مِّنۡهُمۡ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيۡهِمۡۚ إِنَّهُۥ بِهِمۡ رَءُوفٞ رَّحِيمٞ ١١٧

> "Allāh has turned towards the Prophet and the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, those who followed him at the time of difficulty, after the hearts of a group of them has almost deviated, then He turned towards them—He is All-Gentle, Most Merciful to them."
>
> [*at-Tawbah* (9): 117]

Bukhārī records the ḥadīth that the Prophet (ﷺ) would say, "O People! Turn to your Lord in repentance, for by the One in whose hand is my soul, I ask Allāh's forgiveness and turn to him in repentance more than seventy times."[46]

Muslim has the ḥadīth on the authority of al-Agharr al-Muzanī that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A shadow crosses my heart and I ask Allāh's forgiveness one hundred times a day."[47]

The Sunan have the ḥadīth on the authority of ibn 'Umar who

[45] Bukhārī [#794, 817, 4293, 4967, 4968] and Muslim [#484]

[46] Bukhārī [#6307] and at-Tirmidhī [#3259]

[47] Muslim [#2702] and Abū Dāwūd [#1515]

said, We would count the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) saying,

«رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وتُبْ عَلَيَّ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الغَفُورُ»

> "My Lord! Forgive me and turn to me, You are the Oft-Returning, the Forgiving."

one hundred times in one sitting.'[48]

The Two Ṣaḥīḥs record the ḥadīth on the authority of Abū Mūsā that the Prophet (ﷺ) would say,

«اَللَّهُمَّ، اَغْفِرْ لِي خَطِيئَتِي وَجَهْلِي، وَإِسْرَافِي فِي أَمْرِي،
وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنِّي، اَللَّهُمَّ، اَغْفِرْ لِي جِدِّي وَهَزْلِي،
وَخَطَئِي وَعَمْدِي، وَكُلُّ ذَلِكَ عِنْدِي»

> "O Allāh! Forgive me my error, my ignorance, my transgression in my affairs and all that which You know better than I. O Allāh! Forgive my jesting, my solemnity, and my mistakes—both intentional and unintentional—for all of them are from me."

«اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي مَا قَدَّمْتُ، وَمَا أَخَّرْتُ، وَمَا أَسْرَرْتُ،
وَمَا أَعْلَنْتُ، وَمَا أَسْرَفْتُ، وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنِّي. أَنْتَ
الْمُقَدِّمُ، وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤَخِّرُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ»

> "O Allāh! Forgive my past and future sins, what I did secretly and what I did openly, and all that which You

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[48] Abū Dāwūd [#1516] and at-Tirmidhī [#3434] on the authority of ibn 'Umar. Similar aḥādith are recorded on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, Ḥudhayfah, Abū Mūsā by Aḥmad; 'Ā'ishah by Bukhārī, *Adab al-Mufrad* [#619]; Anas, Khubāb and as-Sā'ib by an-Nasā'ī, *'Amal* [#461-463]
The ḥadīth is ṣaḥīḥ and declared so by al-Baghawī [#1289], ibn Ḥibbān [#927] and al-Albānī [#556]

know better than I. You are the one who brings forward and leaves behind and You are the Omnipotent." [49]

The Two Ṣaḥīḥs record the ḥadīth on the authority of Abū Hurayrah who asked the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) about what he said in his period of silence between the opening *takbīr* for prayer and his recitation, he replied, I say:

«اللَّهُمَّ بَاعِدْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ خَطَايَايَ كَمَا بَاعَدْتَ بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ. اللَّهُمَّ نَقِّنِي مِنْ خَطَايَايَ، كَمَا يُنَقَّى الثَّوْبُ الأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الدَّنَسِ، اللَّهُمَّ اغْسِلْنِي مِنْ خَطَايَايَ بِالثَّلْجِ وَالْمَاءِ وَالْبَرَدِ».

"O Allāh! Distance my sins from me in the same way as You have distanced the east from west. O Allāh! Cleanse me of my sins in the same way that a white garment is cleansed of dirt. O Allāh! Wash my sins from me with water, ice and snow." [50]

Muslim and others record that he (ﷺ) would say a similar sup-

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[49] Bukhārī [#6398, 6399] and Muslim [#2719]

[50] Bukhārī [#744] and Muslim [#598]
The author, may Allāh have mercy upon him, comments on this ḥadīth thus, 'Sins lead to the heart feeling feverish, impure and weak. The heart becomes remiss and the fire of lusts is kindled within it serving to sully it; sins are to the heart what wood is to fire. This is why as sins increase, so too does the fire in the heart and its weakness. Water washes away the filth and extinguishes the fire, if this water is cold it shocks the body and revitalises its strength, this effect is heightened with snow and ice and hence is more effective in vanquishing the effects of sins.'—Quoted of him by ibn al-Qayyim, *Ighāthatu-l-Lahfān* [1/94]

plication upon raising his head from the *rukū*'.[51]

Muslim records the ḥadīth on the authority of 'Alī that the Prophet (ﷺ) would say in the opening supplication for prayer,

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ الْمَلِكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ. أَنْتَ رَبِّي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ،
ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَاعْتَرَفْتُ بِذَنْبِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي ذُنُوبِي جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ
لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ. وَاهْدِنِي لِأَحْسَنِ الأَخْلَاقِ لَا
يَهْدِي لِأَحْسَنِهَا إِلَّا أَنْتَ، وَاصْرِفْ عَنِّي سَيِّئَهَا
لَا يَصْرِفُ عَنِّي سَيِّئَهَا إِلَّا أَنْتَ

> "O Allāh! You are the King, there is none worthy of worship save You. You are my Lord and I am your servant. I have wrought evil so forgive me for none forgives sins save You. Guide me to the best morals and manners for none guides me to them save You; turn me away from evil morals and manners for none turns me away from them save You." [52]

Muslim records the ḥadīth that the Prophet (ﷺ) would say in his *sajdah*,

«اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي ذَنْبِي كُلَّهُ، دِقَّهُ وجِلَّهُ، وَأَوَّلَهُ وَآخِرَهُ
وَعَلَانِيَتَهُ وَسِرَّهُ».

> "O Allāh! Forgive me all my sins, the small and great, the open and secret, the first and last." [53]

The Sunan record the ḥadīth on the authority of 'Alī that the

[51] Muslim [#476] and Nasa'ī [1/198, 1/199]

[52] Muslim [#771] and Abū Dāwūd [#760]

[53] Muslim [#483] and Abū Dāwūd [#878]

Prophet was brought an animal to ride whereupon he praised Allāh and said,

سُبْحَٰنَ
ٱلَّذِى سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُۥ مُقْرِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِنَّآ إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا
لَمُنقَلِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

> "Glory be to Him who has subjected this to us. We could never have done it by ourselves and indeed we are returning to Our Lord"
>
> [*az-Zukhruf* (43): 13-14]

Then he praised Him and exalted Him and said, 'Glory be to You! I have wronged myself, so forgive me for none forgives sins save You.' Then he smiled and said, 'The Lord is well pleased with His servant when he says, 'Forgive me for none forgives sins save You,' He says, 'My servant knows that there is none who forgives sins save Me."[54]

Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

فَٱعْلَمْ أَنَّهُۥ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ وَٱسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنۢبِكَ
وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَىٰكُمْ ﴿١٩﴾

> "...and ask forgiveness for your wrongdoing, and for the men and women who are believers"
>
> [*Muhammad* (47): 19]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١﴾ لِّيَغْفِرَ لَكَ ٱللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنۢبِكَ
وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُۥ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَٰطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا ﴿٢﴾

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[54] Abū Dāwūd [#2602] and at-Tirmidhī [#3446].

At-Tirmidhī said that it was ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ and it is was declared ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ at-Tirmidhī* [#2742, 2743].

> "Truly We have granted you a clear victory, so that Allāh may forgive you your earlier sins and any later ones"
> [*al-Fatḥ* (48): 1-2]

The Two Ṣaḥīḥs record the ḥadīth concerning the intercession, in which 'Isā says, Go to Muḥammad, a servant whose past and future sins have been forgiven by Allāh.[55]

The Ṣaḥīḥ records the ḥadīth that the Prophet (ﷺ) would stand [in prayer] until his feet would swell and it was asked of him, 'Why do you do this when Allāh has forgiven your past and future sins?' He replied, 'Should I then not be a grateful servant?'[56]

One can also ask for forgiveness and repent for leaving the best course, so whoever moves to a state better than the one he was in previously could repent from his previous state; however censure and threat can only exist for sin.[57] Allāh knows best.[58]

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[55] Bukhārī [#44, 7410, 7440, 7509, 7515] and Muslim [#193]

[56] Bukhārī [#1130, 4836, 6471] and Muslim [#2819]

[57] The author, *al-Istighfār* [p. 64] says, 'To be totally correct, the punishment for sins is of two types, torment which can be removed by many good deeds; or decrease in ranking and prevention from something one deserves. Allāh, Exalted is He, expiates the sins of the sinner as He says, "If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate your [lesser] sins" [*an-Nisā'* (4): 31].
Sometimes He expiates them by putting a person through tribulation, in which case his ranking stays the same or even increases, and at other times He expiates them because of good deeds that person has done.'

[58] Adapted from the book, *'The Relief from Distress'* authored by Ibn Taymiyyah, pp.82-162, published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers, Birmingham,U.K, 2012. An explanation to the famous *du'ā* of Prophet Yūnus (*'alayhi as-salām*) and an excellent companion work to this book.

APPENDIX TWO

'Does the mere acknowledgement of sin combined with *tawḥīd* lead to its forgiveness?'

With regards the question, 'Does the mere acknowledgement of sin combined with *tawḥīd* lead to its forgiveness and the alleviation of difficulty, or is something else required?' we answer by saying:

What leads to forgiveness of sins, along with *tawḥīd*, is repentance;[1] for example Allāh will not forgive *shirk* unless it be repented from as He, Exalted is He, says in two places,

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[1] The conditions for repentance are as follows: sincerity, feeling remorse for that sin, repenting, and not persisting in the sin, "And those, who when they commit and indecent deed, or wrong themselves, remember Allāh and seek forgiveness for their sins—and who can forgive sins except Allāh?—and who do not persist in what they have done while they know. Those—their reward is forgiveness from their Lord..." [*Āli 'Imrān* (3): 135-136]

Moreover repenting before it is too late, i.e. before the final throes of death or before the sun rises from the west. The author alludes to these conditions, barring the last, in what follows of this chapter and the next.

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِۦ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ
ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ ۚ وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِٱللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَٰلًۢا بَعِيدًا

> "Allāh does not forgive anything being associated with Him but He forgives whoever He wills for anything other than that...."
>
> [*an-Nisā'* (4): 48, 116]

Any sin, other than *shirk*, is forgiven if repented from, but if not, it is up to Allāh, if He wishes, He will forgive it and if He wishes, He will not. Allāh, Exalted is He, says

۞ قُلْ يَٰعِبَادِىَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا۟ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا۟ مِن
رَّحْمَةِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ

> "Say: 'My servants, you who have transgressed against yourselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Truly Allāh forgives all sins, He is Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful'"
>
> [*az-Zumar* (39): 53]

This verse concerns the penitent, and this is why the verse has been generalised and left unrestricted, and it has been decisively stated that He forgives all sins. In the previous verse, however, He says,

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِۦ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ
ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ ۚ وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِٱللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَٰلًۢا بَعِيدًا

> "...but He forgives whoever He wills for anything other than that...."
>
> [*an-Nisā'* (4): 48, 116]

specifying the forgiveness of all sins other than *shirk* to be dependant upon His will. Now if Allāh will only forgive *shirk* for the

one who asks forgiveness, and He will forgive any other sin that person repents from, the only meaning left for this verse is that those sins, other than *shirk*, that are not repented from, Allāh will forgive them, or not forgive them, as He wills.

Acknowledgment of sin, if it includes repentance, combined with *tawḥīd*, leads to forgiveness. When sin is forgiven, its punishment is averted for forgiveness is a shield protecting one from the evil of that sin.

Some people say that *al-ghafr* (forgiveness) means *as-satar* (covering) reasoning that *maghfirah* (forgiveness) and *al-Ghaffār* (the Oft-Forgiving) were only called so because of the meaning they carry of covering and hiding. They also explain the meaning of His Name, *al-Ghaffār* to be *as-Sattār* (the Coverer). This is an incomplete explanation of *al-ghafr*. The meaning of forgiveness is to shield oneself from the evil of sin such that he not be punished for it, hence the one who is forgiven is not punished for that sin. The meaning of covering does not imply this meaning, for the one whose sin has been hidden could still be punished for it in private.[2]

However, despite having repented, a person could still be tried with something that would serve to increase his reward and this does not negate the reality of forgiveness.

Moreover a person could think another to have repented of sin, but in reality he is merely someone who has abandoned that sin. The one who abandons is not the same as the one who has repented. A person may not commit a sin because it never occurred to him to do so, or because he was unable to, or his desire to commit it left him for a reason other than a religious one, all

[2] Refer to: *al-Mufradāt* [p. 362]; *Lisān al-ʿArab* [5/25]; *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lugha* [4/385]

these reasons do not constitute repentance. It is necessary that the penitent believe that what he did was evil, that he hate that deed simply because Allāh prohibited it, and that he leave it for the sake of Allāh and not for some worldly desire or fear. Repentance is from the greatest of good deeds, and all good deeds can only be considered to be so if they are performed for the sake of Allāh and in accordance to His command. Fuḍayl bin 'Iyāḍ said concerning His saying,

ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلْمَوْتَ وَٱلْحَيَوٰةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْغَفُورُ ﴿٢﴾

> "He Who created life and death to test which of you is best in deed"
>
> [*al-Mulk* (67): 2]

'The sincere and correct.' When asked what that means he replied, 'When an action is sincere but not correct, it will not be accepted. When it is correct but not sincere it will not be accepted. It will only be accepted when it is both sincere and correct; sincere that it be only for Allāh; correct that it be performed in the way taught by the Sunnah.'[3]

'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb would say in his supplication, 'O Allāh! Make all my deeds righteous, make them sincerely for Your face, and do not let any portion of them be for anyone else.'[4]

The discussion on repentance has been expounded in detail elsewhere.[5]

[3] *Tafsīr al-Baghawī* [4/369]

[4] Aḥmad, *az-Zuhd* [#615] on the authority of al-Ḥasan from 'Umar. Al-Ḥasan was not contemporary to 'Umar.

[5] Refer to the author's, *at-Tawbah*.

As for acknowledging ones sin, in submissiveness to Allāh, but without the intent to abandon it, then this is merely asking for forgiveness and cannot be said to be repentance. This is like a person who asks of Allāh to forgive his sin but has not repented from it, one cannot be certain of his forgiveness for he is in the position of one who is making a mere supplication. It is established that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'There is no supplicant who supplicates for something that does not contain sin or the severing of kindred-relations, except that one of three things occur: either it is answered in this life; or he gets the likes of it in reward; or its equivalent in evil is averted from him.' They asked, 'O Messenger of Allāh, what if we frequently supplicate?' He replied, 'Allāh increases.'[6]

The likes of this supplication could lead to forgiveness and if not, the attainment of some other good or the aversion of some evil. Hence, in all cases it brings about benefit and this is true of all supplications. Those amongst the scholars who said, 'Asking for forgiveness while persisting in that sin is the repentance of liars' meant one who claims to have repented, if such a person persists in his sin it becomes clear that he has not in reality repented for repentance and persistence in sin are two opposites. Persistence opposes repentance but it does not oppose the mere asking for forgiveness when divorced from repentance.[7]

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[6] Al-Maqdisī, *Targhīb at-Du'ā* [#21] on the authority of Anas. Similar aḥādīth are also reported on the authority of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī by Aḥmad [#11133], 'Ubādah bin as-Ṣāmit by at-Tirmidhī [#3573] and Abū Hurayrah by Aḥmad.

At-Tirmidhī said it was ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ, al-Ḥākim said it was ṣaḥīḥ and adh-Dhahabī agreed as did al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ at-Targhīb* [#1631]

[7] Adapted from the book, *'The Relief from Distress—an explanation to the du'ā of Prophet Yūnus'* authored by Ibn Taymiyyah, pp.163-168, published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers 2012, Birmingham, UK.